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ABSTRACT

The poetry writing in the concentration camps during the Holocaust enabled some people to survive, not in the biological sense, but in the psychological sense because it helped preserve their self esteem. The goal of this curriculum project is to expose students to the Holocaust by reading about the tragedy through the poetry of the victims. The project presents 60 poems written by inmates of Auschwitz (Poland). The lesson plan consists of the following: summary of curriculum project; 60 Holocaust poems; short museum guide book of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps; Elie Wiesel student competition writing form; list of films and documentaries on the Holocaust; travel essay from "New York Times" travel section, "Auschwitz Pilgrimage"; Nuremberg laws; topics on the Holocaust; information on Yad Vashem; some Holocaust Web sites; and gypsies in the Holocaust. It is intended for use with students in grades 10-11. The lesson plan provides a description, goals, procedures, assignments, and assessment suggestions. (BT)

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FULBRIGHT-HAYS SUMMER SEMINAR 2002 IN POLAND AND HUNGARY

POLAND: "BUILDING PARTNERSHIP FOR EUROPE: POLAND AFTER A DECADE OF SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

HUNGARY: "STABLE PARTNER IN DEMOCRACY
JUNE 19-AUGUST 2, 2002

LESSON PLAN ON THE POETRY OF THE HOLOCAUST

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SO 034 471

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Lesson Plan: The POETRY OF THE HOLOCAUST AND AND THEN SOME --MORE MINI-IDEAS/PROJECTS

SUMMARY OF CURRICULUM PROJECT

Why Holocaust Poetry? ----- Why Not Study the Holocaust through Poetry?

The goal of this vast curriculum project is to expose students to the Holocaust by reading about the tragedy through the poetry of the victims. The writting of poetry in the Camps enabled some people to survive---not in the biological sense, but psychological--because it helped preserve their self-esteem. The Auschwitz poetry read again here expands not only our knowledge and awareness of history, but it makes us more sensitive and aware of this colossal tragedy and the millions of victims.

These poems may not have features of outstanding poetry, but each of them is undoubtedly of historical value; they are authentic documents, evidence of inhuman behavior in the time World War II. They are a specific kind of evidence of crime and the strongest although subjective message of the truth about Auschwitz. One can distinguish four points of view or different time frames in the contents: Auschwitz perceived by those who persihed there or lost their closest relatives; by those who survived the war and the hard Auschwitz days; by those who only visited Auschwitz as a museum; and a few poems are written by Nazi soldiers.

A unique approach to teaching the holocaust is to allow students to understand historical events and experiences better than the bare facts alone can do because they enable us to absorb them inwardly. In involving ourselves in the authentic literature of the holocaust, we come as close as we can to entering psychologically into those unique events as they were actually felt by those individuals who experienced them. Primary sources are one of the best ways to experience history. Literature may have a number of other functions to, but in letting the reader into a representative situation, experience, or historical period, it is supreme. As Aristotle pointed out, literature has more to tell us about truth than historial narrative has. Some 60 poems are present here and emanate from many writers, Jews and non-Jews alike, and in many languages.

Many Jews would say, "If you should live to tell the tale, tell the world world what they did to us." Even in the ghettos (in the camps it was impossible) the urge to write, to portray their incremental agony day after day, was overwhelmingly urgent for those who were able to wield a pen. 'Record, record,' urged Emanuel Ringelblum fevereishly as he sat at his table in the Warsaw Ghetto, pen in hand, hungary and cold, knowing that is death is near. People often buried their writings so that it would be preserved.

Also included:

II Purchased from a book store at Auschwitz is a copy here of one of the short, consise, and informative guides of the site for students or the teachers to read. You may want to make a class set of this guide to give to students to read so they can learn first

hand about the camp and appreciate the meaning of the poetry better.

III Searching the internet I came upon the Elie Wiesel student competition writing form as a classroom assignment. You may want to use it for your class as an essay assignment or just to read or discuss the powerful quotes.

IV I have searched some movie books to find out and list most of the major motion pictures made about the Holocaust. The list is rich in films and, of course, some documentaries are also listed. Our generation of students are a 'visual generation' and I believe that showing them a powerful film or documentary would add to their appreciation of the Holocaust Poetry and this will make the poetry more meaningful.

V Reading the Travel Section of the New York Times Sunday paper I found a current article on someone writing about their experience at Auschwitz, entitled, "Auschwitz Pilgrimage" --I include a copy because it is very insightful. The following week letters appeared (also included) responding to this travel article in the N.Y.Times.

VI On the internet I found different sources of the Nuremberg Laws. These laws are the beginning of the end of the rights of the Jews. It would be interesting for your students to examine the specific laws and see what they are all about and how vast and cruel the laws were. One internet assignment that you can give your students is to have them individually or in groups examine the Apartheid Laws of South Africa, the Jim Crows in the U.S. and the Nuremberg Laws of Nazi Germany and to discuss and see how racist regimes and institutions legalize segregation, racism and bigotry.

VII Also found on the internet was a copy of interesting topics on the Holocaust you may want to assign to your students as projects. When they see the list they will realize the vastness of sub and related topics to this vast subject.

VIII I have visited Israel four times and one of the sites to visit and experience is Yad Vashem, which is a memorial to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. You may want to tell your students about this place and its meaning to Jews. This one page is a nice summary and explanation of the site.

VIII I have discovered that there are so many Holocaust sites on the internet and on the various search engines and have listed a few here.

IX I found this interesting summary on what happened to Gypsies during the Nazi period and am including it for your information.

I have discovered that by just reading some books on Holocaust poetry and attempting to do a lesson plan on just that one subject has led me to other topics and areas on the holocaust I truly believe would be of great interest and value to you and your students. I hope that you can use whatever information here you find relevant, useful and educational in approaching such a powerful topic.

Grade Level (S) 10, 11

Subjects: U.S.History, World History

Duration:
This depends on how long the instructor deems it necessary to cover the material contained in the unit or what parts he/she decides to use and how it fits in to individual instructors curriculum. The state of California now requires that a portion of time be given to the teaching of the holocaust in W.W. II.

Each instructor will decide and determine how you use the films and handouts compiled here for use in projects, presentations, and discussions.

Description:
The teacher can use the poems to explain the Holocaust period as seen and experienced by the victims, Jews and nonJews at Auschwitz-Berkenau.

Goals:
Students will demonstrate an understanding of what the victims of the Holocaust underwent by getting insights and the personal perspectives of the authors of the poetry. Students will understanding how effective and real primary sources are in depicting the agony and suffering of the victims.

Procedures:
Put the students in groups and give each group a packet of 6-10 holocaust poems that you reproduced for the class. Each group of students will read their own selected poems and decide which two they would like to read and explain to the class. The students can all put the few poems on transparencies to put them on the overhead projector to read and explain to the class.

It would be effective if the instructor showed a good film/documentary before the poems are read and discussed. Each group will expose the whole class to a variety of poems, experiences and points of view about this event.

Assignments:
You could have students in groups write a poem about some oppressed group in U.S. History from American Indians, Blacks, women, gays,

Mexicians, Asians, factory workers or any oppressed group in U.S.History and tell of their plight and discrimination through poetry and then read the poem to the class. Students can even write a poem on the holocaust from any point of view.

Assessment:

The teacher can grade the group of students for the quality of their poem. depth, understanding, compassion and group contribution. Grades can be given to the group or to individuals who contributed the most to the composition.

Each individual teacher is encouraged to use any of the material contained herein for whatever effective use that they deem appropriate and educational. Many roads lead to Rome and whatever methods you use and routes you take its the journey and trip itself that are part of the reward.

HOLOCAUST POETRY

AUSCHWITZ

VOICES FROM THE GROUND

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Holocaust Poetry is a lasting and solemn tribute to the memory of the past and the hope for the future.

Behold, God of Abraham, God of mercy,
Open your eyes as you have opened mine,
Open your eyes and see what I have seen . . .

—ELIE WIESEL

She felt a kind of envy for
Those who stood naked in their truth:
Where to be one of her people was
To be one of those millions killed.

—STEPHEN SPENDER

Consider whether this is a man.
Who labors in the mud
Who knows no peace
Who fights for a crust of bread
Who dies at a yes or a no.

—PRIMO LEVI

Leopold Staff wrote (1927):

More than bread
Poetry is necessary at times
When there's no need for it at all...

These words of an outstanding poet, which were quoted in the text of an invitation to a literary evening in the ghetto in February 1942, could

The Burning of the Books

When the Regime commanded that books with harmful
knowledge
Should be publicly burned on all sides
Oxen were forced to drag cart loads of books
To the bonfires, a banished
Writer, one of the best, scanning the list of the
Burned, was shocked to find that his
Books had been passed over. He rushed to his desk
On wings of wrath, and wrote a letter to those in power.
Burn me! he wrote with flying pen, burn me. Haven't my
books
Always reported the truth? And here you are
Treating me like a liar! I command you:
Burn me!

Bertolt Brecht
(Translated by John Willet)

THE KZ-DOCTOR

"I'm conscious of my guilt." In weighing words
the man reports about all what he has done in Auschwitz.
About the selection at the ramp. About that woman with
the girl
not wishing to separate from her mother who had been
too weak
for drudgery. "I sent all the three of them into the gas. —
They had punched holes into the pillars,
had put crystals out of tins into them, and by adding air
they had turned them into gas. The gas combined with
the blood,
had made them suffocate." Thus he speaks, like a man
of science, in a cold voice.
That one, that is him they had made out of a doctor,
those great guilty ones who had turned others guilty.

Two thousands at a time had been robbed out, undressed
and suffocated.

But still he went to court.
Well-groomed, well-educated, well-bred,
no animal, a German creature. And still he reckons with
lenience.

First They Came for the Jews

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

Pastor Niemöller

War Has Been Given a Bad Name

I am told that the best people have begun saying
How, from a moral point of view, the Second World War
Fell below the standard of the First. The *Wehrmacht*
Allegedly deplores the methods by which the SS effected
The extermination of certain peoples. The Ruhr industrialists
Are said to regret the bloody manhunts
Which filled their mines and factories with slave workers.
The intellectuals
So I heard, condemn industry's demand for slave workers
Likewise their unfair treatment. Even the bishops
Dissociate themselves from this way of waging war; in short
the feeling
Prevails in every quarter that the Nazis did the Fatherland
A lamentably bad turn, and that war,
While in itself natural and necessary, has, thanks to the
Unduly ininhibited and positively inhuman
Way in which it was conducted on this occasion, been
Discredited for some time to come.

Bertolt Brecht
(Translated by John Willet)

Leave Us

Forget us
forget our generation
live like humans
forget us

we envied
plants and stones
we envied dogs

I'd rather be a rat
I told her then

I'd rather not be
I'd rather sleep
and wake when war is over
she said her eyes shut

Forget us
don't enquire about our youth
leave us

Tadeusz Różewicz
(Translated by Adam Czerniawski)

THE HOSPITAL

Nothing
made
sense

everything
was
unpredictable

an
endless
procession

of
people

were
fed
to the
sky

others
burned
the
earth

and
filled
the
rivers

nothing
made
sense

everything
was
unpredictable

the SS
dreaded

contagious
diseases

Block 20
the
infectious
ward

Never Shall I Forget

Never shall I forget that night,
the first night in the camp
which has turned my life into one long night,
seven times cursed and seven times sealed.

Never shall I forget that smoke.
Never shall I forget the little faces of the children
whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke
beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget those flames
which consumed my faith for ever.
Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence
which deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments
which murdered my God and my soul
and turned my dreams to dust.

Never shall I forget these things,
even if I am condemned to live
as long as God Himself.

Never.

Elie Wiesel

There were about ten thousand dead in that grave.
And after they had dug up the bodies
they were told to burn them.
Planks had been brought and beams – long and heavy.
The Germans also brought a grinding machine to grind the
bones
and the ground bones would be sieved
for the gold fillings of teeth.
The dust of the bones would then be spread over the fields,
and the smell was dreadful.

They kept on working three months
opening mass graves;
and opened eight or nine.
In one those digging saw a boy of two or three,
lying on his mother's body.
He had little white shoes on
and a little white jacket,
and his face was pressed against his mother's.

One grave would remain open for new corpses
coming all the time;
a truck would bring the bodies, still warm,
to be thrown into the grave –
naked as Adam and Eve;
Jewish men, many of them bearded, and Jewish women and
children.
The graves they had opened would be refilled with earth
and they had to plant grass all over them;
as for the dead –
a thousand bodies would be put on a pyre;
and there were two pyres of bodies burning all the time.

Charles Reznikoff

ZOFIA GROCHOWALSKA-ABRAMOWICZ
b. 1902

THE SURVIVAL SYNROME
(from the cycle "Syndromes")

I am fifty-nine years old
unaware of my fate
I have survived
all my bones
remind me now
of the time in the concentration camp
where my only dream was to preserve my life
to be able to retrun into the shade and scent
of a branching lime tree
under the canopy of pear and apple trees
tall ashes, elms, and poplars
on sleepless moonlit nights
I thought too often
when I would be free
I would visit my cousins in the country
who would often treat me
to a slice of crisp bread and aromatic honey
but the fear to this day never leaves me
the smallest rustle, clatter, scream
paralyzes all my being
my whole life I am scared
even by my own shadow
and ever so often I ponder
— how did this happen
that I have survived?...

September 1996

THE HARPS OF BIRKENAU
(a fragment)

[...] Wheels speed along the track
rushing toward the victory of crime,
transporting, transporting, people to gas,
people to a cremator, people to a petrol-sprayed pyre.
Smoke floats, thick foul smoke...
People burn people here.

And on luminous poles
stretched wires shine.
These are the harps of Brzezinka,
harps of Birkenau.

EWA LIPSKA
b. 1945

A YOUNG GERMAN AT A POETRY READING

My name is Albrecht Dürer
but I'm not a painter.
I never wrote a book on castle fortification
nor on human proportions.
13 male types 13 female types.
I live in a small town Marburg in Augustinergasse.
Now Gottfried Benn's ghost sells sausages here.
I belong to the Greens. I'm thirty-five years old.
I've been to Auschwitz.
I used a can opener
to open the past.
I don't want to amortize history
although I'm a lawyer.
I don't want to be guilty forever
just because I'm German.
Sometimes I dream about scrapyards.
About handrails over an abyss.
I saw communism at close quarters.
Small red stars in the mouldy sky.
In the trees instead of leaves
grey coats swung.
I tamed the doves of peace.

Tell me, do you think mankind's insane?
Insane, incomprehensible, aren't they the same?

(1990)

Translated from the Polish by Barbara Plebanek
and Tony Howard

ALAN LUPACK

AUSCHWITZ REPORTAŻ
(a prose poem)

Today we went to Auschwitz. As we approached it, I could feel a heaviness, an oppressiveness in the air. We passed some railroad tracks. I could almost hear the screams and the moans and the dying gasps from trains where people had been crammed like souls satanically stolen from heaven because of a sleeping God.

As I entered the lying gate and looked at the barbed wire — once electrified — and the zone of death, I could feel the bewilderment and the fear of those who had entered before, and then the anguish and terror when they were told by the sadistic SS officer that work would not make them free, that the only way out was through the poison gas and the ovens.

I saw in the buildings of Auschwitz the torn, filthy clothing of the men who weren't allowed to end their days with the dignity of men. I saw the hair cut from the heads of women so that it could be turned into cloth or be used to stuff mattresses. (What dreams those who slept on such mattresses must have had.) I saw the clothing of children and a broken doll — head torn off and mangled, arm cracked — which, if it could feel, would have suffered less than its owner. And I saw the pictures of hundreds of the millions who died there. There were names with each of those faces. And there were families and friends and loves and hates, there were moods and habits, there were lives with each of those names. Until they came to Auschwitz, where there were no names. I saw the wall where men were murdered, and the posts where men were hung like hunks of meat in the shambles of civilization, and the cells where men were starved and suffocated for crimes like stealing food from the pigs of the SS — but where one man gave his life for another. I saw the chambers where the prisoners thought they could escape for a few moments the filth and the stench but where, chaos having come again, water became gas and fire, and people became ashes.

(HEDWIG) HEDDA ZINNER, pseud. ELISABETH FRANK
1907-1994

YOU WON'T

You'll never be a Hitler-boy
You won't anymore lose your mother
You may play, laugh and be merry
You won't only go marching, marching, marching
You don't know either what is 'blood' or what is 'race' —:
You cannot know how happy you are!

You won't report your parents, my son,
You will honour and love your father and mother
You will be taught what is good, what is bad, little man,
You won't care about 'clan' or 'family tree'
You don't know either what is a genealogical 'passport' —:
You cannot know how happy you are!

You won't grieve over your Dad
No whispering will be heard: 'He is in the KZ!'
You won't be petrified with fear by the Gestapo
You don't cry desperately in your bed, my boy,
You don't know either what is Auschwitz
or what is Buchenwald —:
You cannot know how happy you are!

You will be a human being! You will succeed in
Taking away shame and dishonour from Germany.
You will regain the respect of the world,
Yet all that, my boy, is not as easy.
It is completely up to you that Germany will exist again —:
My boy, you cannot know how happy you are!

Translated from the German by Gabriella Deppert

12

I saw Barbara weep at Auschwitz. She wept for the faces of a family never seen, faces she could not find among the pictures on the wall and so would never see. She wept for the old who had worked and who had suffered the things that each men must, but who were not allowed to die with the dignity their endurance deserved. And she wept for the young who did not have a chance to suffer what men must because they were made to suffer what no man ever should, what it was once inconceivable that any man could at the hands of another. And she wept for a world where Auschwitz could exist.

Just across the road from Birkenau (Auschwitz II), whose wooden barracks and wooden bunk beds have none of the lying façade of Auschwitz I, whose gate, if it had a motto, would have said truthfully, "Abandon all hope..." — right across the road, I saw a farm with people working in the field.

As we drove away from Auschwitz, the farmers of the region were burning weeds. Billows of smoke filled the bus and burned our eyes. It was as if we were escaping across the fiery river surrounding hell.

MIROS
b. 1922

MY TIME TO REMEMBER

In commemoration of the Warsaw and Lodz Ghetto uprising and the horrors of Hitler's Death Camps and of the brutal experiments performed at Auschwitz Concentration Camp and Extermination Center by Dr. Joseph Mengele The Auschwitz Angel of Death.

This is my time to remember and my time never to forget, how the Nazis came and beat me and took my things and yet.
They robbed me of my family they robbed me of my life, I fought with all of my courage and I have fought with strife.
They never gave me drink or eat, all they did was slap and beat.
They made me cry they made me scream, they made me live through this horrid dream.
I lived within the Ghettos Wall, I could not move I could not crawl.
I could not walk nor could I lay, the Nazis kicked me day after day.
I tried to run but could not hide, the Nazis laughed that was their pride.
The Nazis pushed the Jews around, they loved to heat us wail a sound.
They loved to hear a Jew cry loud, they shaved our heads and then they bowed,
They made us work and dig our ditches, to them I was one of their bitches.
They put a number on my arm they branded me like a cow, they made me work so very hard they said move schneller now.
I watched the way they killed my mother and all my family, I did not want to live no more they took whatever was in me.
I was so weak I was so frail, I was so skinny as a rail.
I could not eat nor could I drink, I knew my mind was on the blink.
This is my time to remember and remember it well, if ever I have children this story I will tell.

AN AUSCHWITZ CHILDHOOD

You were a wise child
Knowing that crying is not allowed
You were silent because every sounds
Could mean the end
Of your living nonexistence.

You knew to give way to the stronger
And nobody was weaker than you
You kicked your mother in the shins
While she staggered and shivered in the cold
Staying in the rows of living ghosts.

You were a wise child knowing
That you must stand at attention for hours
On mornings roll calls in wintertime
Giving you another rotten potato.

Fear was mightier that all other
Childlike reactions, but when the night
Covered the smelly barracs
People like lobsters before being boiled
Crowded each other tightly

For a moment you have regained your voice
Asking like a child:
Mom, what does it mean an apple
Mom, what does it mean a chicken
Mom, what does it mean a human being...

Knedall Park, June 2nd, 1992

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

The German Frontier at Basel: 1942 & 1992

Just four miles to go and the frontier ahead,
A few miles ahead and the weather ideal.
A soft hanging haze over wooded landscape,
Trees on the turn yet the air warm and dry.
Peacefully at mid-day golden stretches
Of new-mown fields lie open and benign.
A cooling breeze sweeps the grassy slopes.
Early autumn: Tabernacles, Harvest Festival.

Disaster could not strike on a day
Such as this. His papers, after all,
Were in perfect order. His directions
Clear, his plan foolproof. Some food
Stowed away, sufficient cash. No parcels
Or dependents. Just himself with a small,
A really modest sized suitcase. Stop worrying,
He told himself. You're one of the lucky ones.

Only the tell-tale burn in the stomach,
The deliberate effort to relax tense muscles.
Short of breath. Much thirst. Little energy.
At the border at last, he did, he didn't
Expect the difficulties. He was, he wasn't
Prepared for the arrest. He did, he didn't
Anticipate the arrangements: the jam-packed trains,
The sweat, the stench, the gas, the horror.

Today as then, only reversing the directions,
The harvest is in, the fields as peaceful.
Just four miles to go and the frontier ahead:
An invisible line, an unguarded signpost.
Yet fear grips his gut, and anguish and anger:
The black-clad figures, the brutal voices,
The crowded cattle-trucks, the reeking odour,
The sweat, the stench, the gas, the horror.

Hilda Schiff

WITHOUT TOMORROW

Joy dimmed again
Days flow without tomorrow
Without yesterday
Darkness all around me although the sun is shining
I am cold although summer is here
Gray, colorless — even when flowers are blossoming
I see the world through wires and bars
Love disappeared
Days flow without tomorrow
Without yesterday
Torture grows beyond human measure
Heart is poisoned — murder raging
Atrocity spreads beyond the crest
Wanting to reach fame
Wanting to be adored and to attain the hetman's baton
Will diminished
Days flow without tomorrow
Without yesterday
I survive like the lowest animal
Feeling nothing, wanting nothing, believing in nothing
I watch indifferently when my brethren are destroyed
I am numb without a thought
Outside myself... Not caring... Without strength
Oh, give me the right words
Let them speak to me — to others
To the executioners and the innocent
Oh, create words for me torn from God!
My head is on fire as I am standing at the madhouse door
Helpless and silent
Aren't there any words in the world?
Is there anybody willing to find them?
Urgent words — violent like a thunder
Mighty like the sea
Oh, God, have You not created words that powerful?
Allowing those crimes for which there is no name
Letting the suffering go on forever
It's beyond understanding for the mind and heart
Holiest feelings degraded
And we, whose life is over
People without tomorrow, without yesterday

Riddle

From Belsen a crate of gold teeth,
from Dachau a mountain of shoes,
from Auschwitz a skin lampshade,
Who killed the Jews?

Not I, cries the typist,
Not I, cries the engineer,
Not I, cries Adolf Eichmann,
Not I, cries Albert Speer.

My friend Fritz Nova lost his father –
a petty official had to choose.
My friend Lou Abrahms lost his brother.
Who killed the Jews?

David Nova swallowed gas,
Hyman Abrahms was beaten and starved.
Some men signed their papers,
and some stood guard,

and some herded them in,
and some dropped the pellets,
and some spread the ashes,
and some hosed the walls,

and some planted the wheat,
and some poured the steel,
and some cleared the rails,
and some raised the cattle.

Some smelled the smoke,
some just heard the news.
Were they Germans? Were they Nazis?
Were they human? Who killed the Jews?

The stars will remember the gold,
the sun will remember the shoes,
the moon will remember the skin.
But who killed the Jews?

William Heyen

ECONOMICAL MEASURES

Since there was a shortage
of gas
and they wanted to save bullets,
they carted off half-gassed victims,
shoved some into the ovens
and dumped others into a pit;
then they poured gasoline
onto them and lit it —
at the sight
some of the new *Sonderkommandos*
jumped in.

Translated from the German by the author

He Was Lucky

The old man
leaves his house, carries books.
A German soldier snatches his books
flings them in the mud.

The old man picks them up,
the soldier hits him in the face.
The old man falls,
the soldier kicks him and walks away.

The old man
lies in mud and blood.
Under him he feels
the books.

Anna Swirszczynska
(Translated by Magnus J. Krynski & Robert A. Maguire)

Holocaust 1944

To my mother

I do not know
In what strange far off earth
They buried you;
Nor what harsh northern winds
Blow through the stubble,
The dry, hard stubble
Above your grave.

And did you think of me
That frost-blue December morning,
Snow-heavy and bitter,
As you walked naked and shivering
Under the leaden sky,
In that last moment
When you knew it was the end,
The end of nothing
And the beginning of nothing,
Did you think of me?

Oh I remember you my dearest,
Your pale hands spread
In the ancient blessing
Your eyes bright and shining
Above the candles
Intoning the blessing
Blessed be the Lord. . . .

And therein lies the agony,
The agony and the horror
That after all there was no martyrdom
But only futility –
The futility of dying
The end of nothing
And the beginning of nothing.
I weep red tears of blood.
Your blood.

ELIZABETH WYSE *Anne Ranasinghe*

FROM AUSCHWITZ

What big heavy doors!
Strange, lingering odour,
Faint but still here... strong disinfectant.
'Stand round the shower point.'
Wait for the water. Don't think about the crowd.
They don't notice your degradation.
They can't see your shaved head from all the rest!

My God!... They're locking those bloody great doors!
Why?... It can't be!
No, the water will come in a minute.
Don't cry, just be patient,
It will be all over very soon.

There's a noise — up there.
He's lifting that grate.
All eyes watching, wondering.
No sound.
What are those pellets?... Dry disinfectant.
Sulphur!!?

Gas! Gas! Gas! Panic!
The screams, the clutching,
Pulling, scrambling.
The total terror of realisation.

Timeless minutes climbing and scrambling.
Families forgotten. Self preservation.
Flesh on flesh — clutching and tearing.
Gas, screams, death... silence.

EDWARD BOND
b. 1934

IF

If Auschwitz had been in Hampshire
There would have been Englishmen to guard it
To administer records
Marshall transports
Work the gas ovens
And keep silent
The smoke would have drifted over these green hills

It's not that all men are evil or creatures of instinct
We — even our subjective self — are products of history
Of political change
In history two things join
Our will and things beyond our will
We change what we are as a means of controlling these things
That is: we create a new culture
We remain human only by changing
Each generation must create its own humanity

And the smoke will drift over these green hills
Our culture makes us barbarians
It does not allow us to live humanely
We must create a new culture
Or cease to be human

WASTED LIFE

Wasted life
what a shame
That the days flow without any meaning
That instead of laughter — I know only tears

I am sorry, so sorry
That I have lost all hope so long ago

How to agree with human meanness?
How to think about dying — when the world is calling!
I am not even twenty years old
I am young!
Young,
YOUNG!
Wasted life, what a shame...

Auschwitz, 1944

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

A REBIRTH OF MAN

I was liberated, I was dressed in an SS uniform.
Man became man! Without wishing to boast!
Freedom and life! I'm shouting in German like a dog
und unintentionally raising my hand I'm crying *Heil!*

From the camps to the camps. Hundreds of railroad loading platforms,

the consignments — like in Birkenau,
nothing has changed till now!
I'm serving soup in the camp, I'm shouting at the children,
I'm reading *Mein Kampf*
and I'm dreaming — about burning people in the crematory.

Translated from the Polish by Adam A. Zych

STEWART J. FLORSHEIM
b. 1952

REAL CHOCOLATE

The practice of gang rape of female prisoners by soldiers was a common occurrence in the camps...
— Anonymous inmate at Auschwitz

They lured me out of the barracks
with promises of chocolate
and words like "Schätzchen,"
but the other women knew,
and called me soldier's whore
even before they heard the noises outside.
I knew as well,
but hunger has a way of changing you,
of causing you to forget who you are.
Funny, how there can be hope in desperation.

They threw the chocolate on the ground
and laughed: "Da, friß". I longed for it,
and tasted mud. "Dreh dich rum, Judenschwein."
I saw big black boots, pairs and pairs,
and the ground was so muddy,
it seemed to give way to my body.
I hiked up my prisoner's garb and spread my legs.
They were so light and opened so easily
that I thanked God because I knew
I wouldn't resist.
This body is no longer mine, this hunger;
at last, there is no reason to fight.

I wonder now if their desire for me
was a desire for death,
fucking a bald woman who was only skin and bones,
whose only salvation would be a cup of watery soup
for dinner, a slice of stale bread,
and maybe, if the soldiers wanted her again,
this time, a piece of real chocolate.

MONIKA DOMBKE, maiden name ZATKA
b. 1920

A LETTER TO MOTHER
(a fragment)

[...] Electric wires, high and double
Won't let you Mom — you won't see your daughter
So don't believe those censored letter of mine
cause truth is different; but don't cry, Mom.

And if you would like to seek out your child's trace
Don't ask anyone, don't knock anywhere:
Look for the ashes in the fields of Auschwitz
It will be there. But don't cry — enough of bitterness here.

And if you would like to discover your child's trace
Look for the ashes in the fields of Birkenau
They'll be there — so look for the ashes
In the fields of Auschwitz, in the woods of Birkenau,

Mom, look for the ashes — I'll be there!

Monika
Birkenau, 1943

Translated from the Polish by Jarosław Brzeziński

MICHAEL ETKIND

AUSCHWITZ "MUSEUM"

Dead hair
that once adorned
young women's heads
now lies
behind transparent glass.

Old shoes
that shod their feet
and brought them here.

Old spectacles,
false teeth,
some crutches, and
some artificial limbs.

MAGDA HERZBERGER
b. 1926

MEMORIAL
(from the cycle "The Concentration Camps. Auschwitz")

Death was lurking constantly
In the concentration camps
Of Germany.
So many times
I could have been selected
For the gas chambers
To meet the horrible fate
Of all the infants, the children,
The young, the old,
The sick, the disabled,
Who were executed
In the mysterious
"White House" of Auschwitz,
Whose naked bodies were thrown
To the furnaces
Of the huge crematoriums,
Whose ashes were used
On the fields and the gardens.
Day and night
The great flames
Of the ovens
Belched from the chimneys.
The air was filled
With the strange,
Sickening, sweetish odor
Of burning flesh.
I mourn you, innocent victims,
Members of my family,
My fellow prisoners,
Who were silenced forever
By the Nazis.

RIDDLE

From Belsen a crate of gold teeth,
from Dachau a mountain of shoes,
from Auschwitz a skin lampshade,
Who killed the Jews?

Not I, cries the typist,
Not I, cries the engineer,
Not I, cries Adolf Eichmann,
Not I, cries Albert Speer,

My friend Fritz Nova lost his father —
a petty official had to choose.
My friend Lou Abrahms lost his brother.
Who killed the Jews?

David Nova swallowed gas,
Hyman Abrahms was beaten and starved.
Some men signed their p[illegible]ers,
and some stood guard,

and some herded them in,
and some dropped the pellets,
and some spread the ashes,
and some hosed the walls,

and some planted the wheat,
and some poured the steel,
and some cleared the rails,
and some raised the cattle.

Some smelled the smoke,
some just heard the news.
Were they Germans? Were they Nazis?
Were they human? Who killed the Jews?

The stars will remember the gold,
the sun will remember the shoes,
the moon will remember the skin.
But who killed the Jews?

STRANGER!

From whatever country you come,
look at the ruins of the camp.
Think, and do all you can,
so your pilgrimage
be not in vain,
as was not in vain our death...
For you and your children,
the ashes of Auschwitz are
a warning.
Act so that the terrible fruit
of hatred,
whose traces you saw here,
will never grow a new seed
neither tomorrow, nor ever!

Unknown translator

OF AUSCHWITZ

Now I must tell you of Auschwitz
Only because I have been there
And it is still there
Having its mark.

The Camp, that place is beyond
A simple telling: the madness
The dark disease of it
Is still incomprehensible.

Flowers grow there now, wild ones
As do grass and trees:
My heart tells me
I should be barren.

We sat on the roadside
in the hot May sun
and the ants came
crawling up out of
cracks in the pavement
carry dust,
the dust of generation:
ashes and dust.

We stood on the steps
of Block 11
in the Yard of Death
by the doorway
to the dungeons
and on the gray cement
a small alabaster shell
bird's egg
lay shattered:
in the silence the memory
will not die

On that day in the place
were skeleton lived
and cruelty
fertilized a jungle.
There, in the heart of the afternoon
as we shared tea
an owl called
over and over:
Signalling a change.
A change of weather
said my Polish
companion.
Always a hope
I sighed

And we went to the other camp
To Brzezinka, Auschwitz II and its
Bareness, to its terminal
Platform and skeletal buildings.

It was too huge and horrible
The platform was overgrown
With flowers, wild flowers,
Daisies, buttercups:

We picked some
To take home with us
To his home
And my home so much
Further away.

We sat together
in deep silence
before the monument
of stone and listened
to the wind,
and to a farmdog
barking
and to a coockoo bird
calling
and we watched
a girl ride

TAMAR RADZYNER

THAT TIME

There was a lady cried
over a cup
she broke
a childhood
treasure.
What a pity
I said.
What a pity.

At the townhall
a young official said:
you must have had
some documents
in Auschwitz!
Oh my God,
I said.
Oh my God.

Another lady sighed:
we were hungry too,
only one single dress
to wear to the theatre...
Ah yes, the war,
I said.
The war.

When people ask me
about that time
I find nothing to say.

Translated from the German by Gitta Holroyd-Reece

DAVID RAY

KITTY RETURNS TO AUSCHWITZ

A woman returns to Auschwitz
telling her son
who strolls beside her —
"This is were I shot —"
row upon row upon row
of holes in iron planks.
"This is where the SS
herded all my friends
into a truck —
This is where I said farewell
to my sister —
This is where I buried
gold off the bodies —"
And she stoops and digs
till a necklace
turns up. "And this is where
the shot bodies fell
into the ditch —" She claws
which he, being a doctor,
identifies — a man's elbow.
"Perhaps it is your grandfather,"
she tells him and briefly
weeps, adding her tears
to the puddle which already
holds molecules of bodies,
her sister's, her mother's.
We look over her shoulder
at the captured photograph
album, visit the warehouses,
pyramids of hair,
mountains of coats passed on
to the cold men of Stalingrad.
Here, stripped in the snow,
threatened with guns,

JAN PIĄTEK
1910-1988

AUSCHWITZ

Auschwitz, a horrible, horrendous word
Its sound bring graying hair
And a shudder to world's conscience
Auschwitz, a place where father
Does not recognize a son or son a father
A brother could put out eyes of a brother
For a slice of bread
Auschwitz, a place where a person could become something
To another human being
Which could not be explained in words
Of any language of the world
Auschwitz is a giant cemetery
Without crosses or graves
Where millions people lay
In a barrow of ashes
Auschwitz is a place in which
Whoever has the courage to visit
Let him with humility bend his head and kneel down
Before this majestic place of death and silence

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

MARIAN PIECHAL
1905-1989

AUSCHWITZ
(a fragment of the poem
"Wind from the Vistula")

(...) They here — already ashes today
and smoke, a product of fire —
with millions of eyes
staring at passers-by.

Two rivers with a third river
Vistula, are crossing:
an Auschwitz's Sola
with Bible's Jordan.

Centuries after centuries their waters
are rinsing out the blood from this land
mildew from the rainbow on the flags
salty tears from pupils (...).

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

RESCUED FROM AUSCHWITZ

A tear drop fell from eyelids
which shone like a dew
and tricky sparrows flew to her
and pecked at her again and again.

That grain was for them too hard
that grain kernel with a sorrow spark
neither from diamonds nor from cadium
but a worthless drop
of salty tear block, as heavy as the globe.

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

AUSCHWITZ #1

With gradual rhythm snowflakes
Fell on barracks and roads,
Covering trees, surrounding
With merciful cold.
Within the white blanket,
Death and peace:
Wintertime and soon expected
Christmas.
Christmas without candles
Without music
Without food and without warm clothes.

At this time a young woman
Dragged herself into the field
Through the cold snow
To give birth to her first child
Without help, without love.
The crying infant came into life.

Along came three drunken Nazis
And watched with amusement
This miracle happening before their eyes,
And they took the baby
And threw it in the oven —
A sacrifice to their Führer.

This happened while the young mother
Froze to death:
Around Christmastime,
After nearly two thousand years
Of Christianity.

AUSCHWITZ #5
"Devilish Tortures Invented by Humans"

A man torn from his home
Separated from his wife
And children,
Ready to die.
But not before a struggle —
Fists in the face of devils
Who guarded Auschwitz.

For making a fist
They invented a torture:
The one who had dared
Had to make a fist forever.
They cut his fingertips,
And made an incision in the palm
Of his hand into which
They forced his fingers to grow.

A mouth that spoke
Would be robbed of its tongue,
And someone who did not obey
Immediately
Would have to sit all day
With a loudspeaker blasting
Into both his ears
Until he went deaf and crazy.

Someone who tried
To steal a slice of bread
Would be tied to a tree
And food put before him
Until the heat of the sun
And the cold of the night
Hurried his starvation.

OSHÉ LIBA
1931

THE FIDDLER FROM AUSCHWITZ

To Jack-Yaacov Strumsa
— Survivor from Salonika

Every morning
even when perchance
there was no nightmare
when I was not awakened
in a cold sweat,
when I did not arise in fright
in terror of the SS.
Every single morning.

I ask myself
where shall I go today?
I dress, drink tea,
start the car
and drive off —
where to?

The engine purrs
the sites rush by
the avenue, the traffic lights
the road leads up,
up the hill,
the open gate.
Every morning
Yad Va'Shem —
the Holocaust Memorial.

The same hum
the same voices
the same notes
the same music
the march

the little town in flames.
The music leads my car,
draws me like a magnet
like a cable
like the chain of a winch
to Yad Va'Shem.

The Remembrance Tent
the Eternal Light
candles
the Hall of Names
the photos, eyes,
teeth, golden dentures, human hair.
Here are the gas chambers,
the furnaces
the crematoria
and Jews in striped, shapeless clothes
pushing bodies.
Naked women trying in vain
to hide their shame
on the brink of the common grave.
Only the stench, the smoke and the music
are missing.

What means the noise,
the cadence of steps
"Links, left, left...!"
The whip, the shots,
"Labour makes free"
on the arch above the gate.
And all around
walls, dogs, and barbed wire;
lists of names and numbers
and there is a hand — Yad, hands.
In the parade, who comes, who goes
where from, where to?

I played the fiddle there,
I was selected
for the orchestra
leading each day, in music,
the Jews driven
to the gas chambers

to the edge of the abyss
to the place from where
no one returns, no one comes back
is only removed, a corpse
to the incinerators.

No longer any need to run
no reason for fear
but this tune still turns round in my head.
And so, I will arrive
here, today, yesterday,
tomorrow
in front of the musicans' photo:
an orchestra leading
the endless file of those who walk
in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Yes, I'm a grandfather now
my hair is white;
very little remains of me
but my features still resemble
a little bit, the fiddler, me,
there on the photo
from Auschwitz.

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And yet it happens
that a visitor to Yad Va'Shem will look at me,
stare at the wall, and be stunned.
As if he saw one
from beyond the divide —
an apparition that, for him,
belongs to the other world;
that, for me, is
the world that was.

I will come here
morn by morn,
day by day,
with that music haunting me,
to the images on the wall
and to the stench in my nostrils
which only I can perceive.

This is my place, here I belong.
I am not a "living statue":
I live.
Of this monument
I am a part.
This Yad Va'Shem —
Hand and Name —
and body:
mine.

NIGHTMARE!
(from the cycle "The Concentration Camps. Auschwitz")

Behind thick clouds
Of false illusion
Dwell the phantoms
Of delusion,
Spreading chaos and confusion
Over the distorted world below,
Letting their tears of madness
Flow
Amidst a weird creation
Of wild fancy and imagination...

It is raining in my heart.
Drops of sadness fall
Upon my sick and suffering soul
Drowning my joy...

I crumble like an old
Discarded toy...

For sanity I pray
While my spirit turns slowly
Dull and gray...

DELUSION
(from the cycle "The Concentration Camps. Auschwitz")

I am lying in my bed,
Feeling a dullness in my head...
Somebody cries.
I open my eyes...
I feel a sharp pain

In my chest...
A stranger is boring a hole
In my breast...
Reaching for my heart
To tear it apart...
Leaving in its place
An empty space...
With horror, I realize
That my hands and feet are tied
And all my movements are denied...
I try to shout for help
But no sound leaves my throat,
My vocal cords are caught
And squeezed by terror...
Fresh blood is staining
The pure color
Of my sheet...
Then, I see a white hand
Wiping everything clean,
And there is no trace of me
Or of the place
Where once I have been...
Could this be real?
Or is it a fake?
Am I dreaming?
Or am I awake?

CRY FOR HELP
(from the cycle "The Concentration Camps. Auschwitz")

Oh, my soul,
Upon you I call
In my unhappy moments.
Bring consolation,
Easy my torments —

ON THE WAY TO THE GRAVE
(from the cycle "The Waltz of the Shadows.
III. Persecution")

We were hauled
Into the somber freight cars
And placed behind bars —
Then, the dors were locked —
Our freedom was taken —
We were left in the darkness
Doomed and forsaken —
Ready to be shipped
To our place of execution...
    The slow puffing
    Of the steam engine
    Grew faster and faster,
    As the locomotive
    Pulled us further and further
    Into the unknown —
    As the train rolled on and on,
    Our last spark of hope was gone...
        Some of us cried —
        Others tried to rebel,
        In vain —
        Sorrow and pain
        Crept into our hearts,
        Chiling our bodies,
        Clouding our minds,
But gradually
Most of us succumbed
To the strong power
Of destiny...
    Sitting, silently,
    Hour after hour
    On the cold, wooden floor —

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Lamenting no more —
Only a few
Were still pounding
The heavy door
With their fists,
And shouting, "Open up!
Why are we here?"
No one could hear
Our desperate outcry...
    Then suddenly
    The train stopped —
    We were in Germany,
    Facing the barbed wire fence
    Of Auschwitz...
    Humiliated, heartbroken,
    Waiting for the judgment
    Of guilt
    To be pronouced
    On the innocent...
        Each of us
        Was possessed by fear,
        We were so near
        To death
        That we could feel
        Its breath.
        We were robbed, trapped,
        And with horror,
        Into the German concentration camps
        We stepped!

Your wailing cries
And your terrible contortions
Met deaf ears
And blind eyes.
I was destined to live,
To bear my misery.
God chose me to return,
To remind the world
Of your agony.
Erecting tombstones
In your memory —

HOLOCAUST
(from the cycle "The Concentration Camps. Auschwitz")

Clad in rags
In the midst
Of the German concentration camps
In Auschwitz,
I addressed, in my despair,
An SS guard
Carrying in his truck
A tank of fresh water —

"A drop of water, I implore
And nothing more!
Each day on my tongue
New wounds burst,
I am dying of thirst —"

My fellow prisoners
Who shared my mistery
Were crying out loudly —

"Water, water, please,
Our sores we want to appease,
We are dying of thirst!
Have pity on us!
Our tortures must cease!"

But our voices hit the hard stones,
Our bitter outcry
Met only cruelty —
The SS guard reached
For his thick and heavy
Rubber stick briskly
And started beating us savagely —
The harsh blows
Cracked the skin on our backs —
We were bleeding,
Revealing the bare human flesh —

"Get out of my way!"
He shouted.
"I don't care if you live or die —
From this water
You will have no share!
Blows I can give you plenty,
So don't provoke me!"

He placed his foot
On the gas pedal
And speeded up his vehicle,
Leaving everyone
With painful, ugly scars —
Some of us were raging,
Our parched lips were craving
For water —
Those who tried to follow his truck
In order to catch the moisture
From the exhaust pipes
And the few drops
Dripping from the small opening
Of the shaking tank
Were savagely massacred
By the rolling tires —
The driver was madly running over

JULIUS BALBIN
b. 1917

ZUZI

Forty-four years
have already gone by
since the glow
of your big eyes
wounded my heart.

Zuzi,
I have never forgotten you
since I noticed you
behind the barbed wire
of the women's camp in Plaszow,
which for days
was so teeming
with newly arrived
Hungarian Jews.

You were at that time
on your way
to your doom
in the mass-murder camp
of Auschwitz
and had no premonition
of that.
You smiled at me
from behind the barbed wire,
having introduced yourself —
Zuzi Riegelhaupt.

Oh, my graceful beauty,
in all your unsuspecting innocence:
I have never forgotten you,
and never will.

Would these modest verses
be the urn
for your vanished ashes —
the tombstone
for ever
memorizing you.

1980

Translated from the Esperanto by the author

DWELLINGS OF DOOM

Jews, Christians,
rich and poor,
children, young and old,
were driven
from the streets, homes
and all the hiding places of Europe
and transported
to the dwellings of doom at Auschwitz,
which only two and a half years ago
opened its gate
to receive the first human cargo.

Until the summer of 1944
three and a half million people
were murdered
in this inferno.

Now hundreds of thousands
of Hungarian Jews
were amassed waiting
their turn to be gassed and burned
in the fires of the crematoria.
However, these could not incinerate
more than nine thousand bodies
in twenty-four hours.

The Commandant Rudolf Höss
was not naive.
He solved this problem,
ordering digging behind the crematoria,
in the fields punctuated by wild flowers
now fully blooming,
caves vast as ravines.
Thousands of bodies were thrown
into these caves and burned.
But the coke necessary for incineration
was too valuable as fuel
for wasting it on Jewish cadavers.
The Nazis soon found
that if a fat body was burning
together with a thin one
his fat could better serve as fuel
consuming both.
Soon it was uncovered
that a woman with children
made a combination
yet more efficient.

The caves were filled
with two thousand bodies each time.
The melting fat flowed into containers
for reuse —
poured over the flaming bodies,
which seemed — according to a witness —
shackled by thousands
of tiny red and blue flames
licking them.
Bubbles rapidly formed
and burst on their skin,
while the cauterizing heat
exploded their bellies.
The frying flesh
elicited violent hissing
and spitting
making stronger and stronger
the intense heat.
The blue and red flames
gave off incandescent hues.
It seemed that the bodies

were being roasted there
for the feast
of a thousand Satans.

Still a half million people
were to be murded,
for the most part asphyxiated by gas,
and burned in this way,
before the invading Russians
would liberate — late and in vain —
these dwellings of doom of the innocent.

Here manifold visions of Hell
were eclipsed for ever.

Here the quintensential epitome
of Evil —
the nine circles of the 13 Dantean
were realized on earth.

Auschwitz — the creation monumentalized
Nazi Germany
that attributed to itself the right
to decide
who shall live and who shall die.

Translated from the Esperanto by Claire Lieberman

understand the incomprehensible living
but as long as life pulsates in me with a strong rhythm
I like to forget about death
at least in writing

September 12, 1982

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

FRUMA

a name
long not mentioned
by chance scopped out
from the world of ashes
from the gap of memories

emaciated
transparent pale faced
curled up near me under a blanket
on a bunk in block
two weeks after typhoid selection*
speaking
absorbed in lovely scenes
about her home about mother
about delicacies which she once at

* At the time when in the fall of 1943 was a typhoid epidemic there were often selecitons but there was no need to take off clothes till naked. They used to look at the tongue. A white tongue was a verdict for gas. On the described selection nobody was taken to the gas chamber as usual, but they marked something near the number of an individual prisoners. After two weeks they called numbers of women during a blocade in the camp and dragged them undressed to their death — author's note.

I listen
warming myself with ber body's warmth
imagining her home
in unknown Sosnowiec
about the fantastic delicacies
— though I was younger, I'd been longer in the camp
they dragged me to Birkenau
from the Warsaw ghetto
and from the gas chamber in Majdanek
we mutually supported each other
in the barrack
a noisy crowd of active prisoners
today there was a dense fog in Auschwitz
awful chill uncommon chance
the command — nobody works today
we can return to our bunks
put to sleep hunger and daydream about the happy past

all of sudden
a kapo at the door
turmoil grows tension
calling out numbers
we were lost in Frume's tale
maybe they are taking somebody to work
or somebody is being punished
with so many women on the block
we don't pay attention

silence
after the next number is called
furious repeated calls
stopping at half sentence
silently
— jumps of the bunk
near the door she took off her clothes
covering herself with a gray rough blanket
chased in the group of chosen
to the gas

under the blanket
still warm from her body
sounds of touching voice about home
about mother, about mother's cooking

before the eyes behind the barrack
dense smoke from a huge chimney

she was 16 years old and had a delicate pale face
quiet human kindness in this hell on earth
and so much was left of her in me
forever

July 5, 1994

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

I WANTED

I wanted to write
or simply to tell
about the block in Birkenau
about my upper bunk
today empty clean
I came
wanted to get up there
I gripped tight with my hands
like then with all the others
nobody was forbidding me now
nobody rushed me shouting
hitting
nobody cursed or bit my fingers
but the burden was impossible
legs did not carry
the topic crushed words
suppressed voice
crossed-out the present
only tears burning under the eyelids
wringing tears on my cheeks

sobs tearing my chest till it bursts
I outlasted here everything
whole my life
and death
can I finally weep it out
till the end?

ber 10, 1994

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

THERE IS MY SOUL

there among the ghosts
between the barracks
crematorium's ruins
silence full of murmurs
audible, visible but
only to me
faces figures
betwen present greenery
or whiteness of snow
futile moans, prayers
Dead and gone suspended forever
in the clouds over Auschwitz
on the ground, in the earth
in every pebble, speck of sand
speck of dust
over there among ashes and bones
crushed mixed
crowds of soul in space
lost for eternity
also mine
it's not important where I live
when how or where I will die

VAN K. BROCK
b. 1932

THE FAUCETS

. . . one or two per second died
just at Auschwitz. Not
a kitchen faucet's steady drip, but all faucets,
house and yard, suburbs and cities of Europe,
dripping at once:

Sachsenchausen Oranienburg Dachau
Lvov Janowska,
Over 150 camps Warsaw,
in Poland alone Treblinka,
Vilna,
not counting ghettos Ponar,
starved burned machine-gunned Kiev.
buried alive in cavernous trenches Babi Yar,
people funnelled
Lublin, Buchenwald,
worked starved Belsec,
Sobibor, Riga,
shipped in lots Lodz,
Minsk Chelmno,
from Berlin, Amsterdam, Majdanek,
Belsen, Bergen,
Prague, Paris, Vienna, Ravensbrück,
Auschwitz,
Budapest, Belgrade Birkenau,

Bucharest, Athens . .
. .
the capitals and ghettos of Europe to Auschwitz
Wouldn't the Pope have broken with his plumber . . .
for such a loss? . .
Killed one or two per second just at Auschwitz. .
And less than one per minute on the whole Western Front.

WŁADYSŁAW BRONIEWSKI
1897 - 1962

A WORD ABOUT STALIN
(a fragment of the poem)

VII

In my country
Millions of tombstones
Through my country
Passed an inferno

Through my country
Passed an adversity
In my country
Was Auschwitz

Cemetery grounds
Joyful land
Grain sprouting
Spring awakening!

Proud Warsaw
Proud Moscow
When will eyes
From bloody tears dry up? [...]

(10 - 12 XII 1949)

Translated from the Polish by June Friedman

Leaving You

It has taken me
a long time to know
that it was your war
not mine

that I wasn't
in Auschwitz
myself

that I have never
seen
the Lodz Ghetto

or Stuthof
or a cattle wagon
or a selection queue

I thought
I knew
Nazis

I thought
I had lived
with fear

with
ration cards
with work permits

I thought I knew
what bodies gnawed by rats
looked like

and how
the mattresses
smelt

and what
it felt like
to fill your lungs

with
smoke
from flesh

to
live
with death

I have had
trouble
Mother
leaving you.

Lily Brett

I Keep Forgetting

I keep forgetting
the facts and statistics
and each time
I need to know them

I look up books
these books line
twelve shelves
in my room

I know where to go
to confirm the fact
that in the Warsaw Ghetto
there were 7.2 people per room

and in Lodz
they allocated
5.8 people
to each room

I forget
over and over again
that one third of Warsaw
was Jewish

and in the ghetto
they crammed 500,000 Jews
into 2.4 per cent
of the area of the city

and how many
bodies they were burning
in Auschwitz
at the peak of their production

twelve thousand a day
I have to check
and re-check

and did I dream
that at 4pm on the 19th January
58,000 emaciated inmates
were marched out of Auschwitz

was I right
to remember that in Bergen Belsen
from the 4th-13th of April 1945
28,000 Jews arrived from other camps

I can remember
hundreds and hundreds
of phone numbers

phone numbers
I haven't phoned
for twenty years
are readily accessible

and I can remember
people's conversations
and what someone's wife
said to someone else's husband

what a good memory
you have
people tell me.

Lily Brett

from Holocaust

Once, among the transports, was one with children – two
freight cars full.
The young men sorting out the belongings of those taken to
the gas chambers
had to undress the children – they were orphans –
and then take them to the 'lazarette.'
There the SS men shot them.

A large eight-wheeled car arrived at the hospital
where there were children;
in the two trailers – open trucks – were sick women and men
lying on the floor.
The Germans threw the children into the trucks
from the second floor and the balconies –
children from one year old to ten;
threw them upon the sick in the trucks.
Some of the children tried to hold on to the walls,
scratched at the walls with their nails;
but the shouting Germans
beat and pushed the children towards the windows.

The children arrived at the camp in buses,
guarded by gendarmes of the French Vichy government.
The buses stopped in the middle of the courtyard
and the children were quickly taken off
to make room for the buses following.
Frightened but quiet,
the children came down in groups of fifty or sixty to eighty;
the younger children holding on to older ones.
They were taken upstairs to empty halls –
without any furniture
and only dirty straw bags on the floor, full of bugs:
children as young as two, three, or four years of age,
all in torn clothes and dirty,

for they had already spent two or three weeks in other camps,
uncared for
and were now on their way to a death camp in Poland.
Some had only one shoe.
Many had diarrhoea
but they were not allowed in the courtyard
where the water-closets were;
and, although there were chamber pots in the corridor of each
story,
these were too large for the small children.

The women in the camp who were also deportees
and about to be taken to other camps
were in tears:
they would get up before sunrise
and go into the halls where the children were –
in each a hundred to a hundred and twenty –
to mend the children's clothing;
but the women had no soap to clean the children,
no clean underwear to give them,
and only cold water with which to wash them.
When soup came for the children,
there were no spoons;
and it would be served in tins
but the tins were sometimes too hot for the children to hold.

A visitor once stopped one of the children:
a boy of seven or eight, handsome, alert and gay.
He had only one shoe and the other foot was bare,
and his coat of good quality had no buttons.
The visitor asked him for his name
and then what his parents were doing;
and he said, 'Father is working in the office
and Mother is playing the piano.'
Then he asked the visitor if he would be joining his parents
soon –
they always told the children they would be leaving soon to
rejoin their parents –
and the visitor answered, 'Certainly. In a day or two.'
At that the child took out of his pocket
half an army biscuit he had been given in camp
and said, 'I am keeping this half for Mother';
and then the child who had been so gay
burst into tears.

Charles Reznikoff

A Dead Child Speaks

My mother held me by my hand.
Then someone raised the knife of parting:
So that it should not strike me,
My mother loosed her hand from mine.
But she lightly touched my thighs once more
And her hand was bleeding –

After that the knife of parting
Cut in two each bite I swallowed –
It rose before me with the sun at dawn
And began to sharpen itself in my eyes –
Wind and water ground in my ear
And every voice of comfort pierced my heart –

As I was led to death
I still felt in the last moment
The unsheathing of the great knife of parting.

Nelly Sachs
(Translated by Ruth & Matthew Mead)

from Holocaust

When the Second World War began
he was living in Lodz with his mother.
The family was hungry
and his mother became bloated from hunger –
as many were.
His mother and her family escaped from the ghetto in Lodz
and fled to the Warsaw ghetto;
but there it became much worse:
his mother had sold everything she had
and they had nothing to eat.
She then told him to get to the Lublin area
where other members of the family lived,
and he escaped to a small town.

One morning he heard cries and shrieking:
the Germans were taking the Jews to the market place.
They crowded them into freight cars
and he was among them.
There was hardly room to stand
and many fainted.
But the journey took only two or three hours
and they were brought to a death camp.
When they got off the train
they were hurried to a small gate,
the SS men shouting, 'Hurry! Hurry!'
and there the men were taken from the women and children.
While this was going on
a band was playing.

The men stayed there all night
but the women and children were taken at once to the gas chambers.
Many of the Jews had not believed there would be any mass extermination –
a few murders, of course;
and even when they were jammed into the freight cars,
many were happy not to be going to a camp they knew to be a hard labour camp
and going eastward instead:
it had been rumoured that they would be taken to the Ukraine to work in the fields
now that Germany had taken over most of it.
But some remembered a Jew who had come to town and said:
'Do not believe what you are told.
The Jews are not being taken to the Ukraine;
they are sent to death camps –
and killed there.'
But nobody believed him;
they thought he was just trying to start a panic.
And even in the camp they had now been sent to –
a few hundred feet from the gas chambers –
the men were told by the Germans that in a few weeks they would rejoin their families.
They saw the belongings of the women and children piled up;
but the Germans said:
'They are getting new clothes.
You are going to be gathered together and then sent to the Ukraine.'

• • •

Refugee Blues

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there's no place for us, my dear, yet there's no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you'll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew:
Old passports can't do that, my dear, old passports can't do that.

The consul banged the table and said,
'If you've got no passport you're officially dead':
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go today, my dear, but where shall we go today?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:
'If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread':
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;
It was Hitler over Europe, saying 'They must die':
O we were in his mind, my dear, O we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren't German Jews, my dear, but they weren't German Jews.

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren't the human race, my dear, they weren't the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors:
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

March 1939
W. H. Auden

A Footnote Extended

for Thomas Szasz's *Karl Kraus and the Soul Doctors*

Dr Szasz, professor, sir,
I read your book.
I won't make criticisms (I could)
but more attention, please,
for Egon Friedman,
born in Vienna, 1878,
of Jewish parents.

Who, insulted, endured.
Who studied in Berlin,
later in Heidelberg:
studied German
studied philosophy
studied natural science;
did not write a treatise
on the whale,
that hunted mammal
posing as a fish.

But returned to Vienna,
changed his visiting card.
Friedell now, not Friedman.
'Hello Dr Friedell,
you're a mensch, Dr Friedell.
Here's a bowl of wax apples,
here's a vase of paper flowers,
here's margarine in a lordly dish.'

He ignored such tauntings.
Tall, he turned the other cheek,
he converted to Christianity –
defended the Gospel
against Mosaic subversion;
attacked the Jewish Science
of Psychoanalysis,
called its practitioners –
Freud, Abraham, Stekel –
'underground blood-suckers'.

Ah, applause now
for the proselyte
so soon to be successful,
so edgily celebrated
under the probing, chalky
spotlight of cabaret-actor,
writer, critic, author of
Cultural History of the Modern Age.

When the Nazis marched
into Austria
– strange amphigouri
of circumstance –
Friedell, in his bachelor room,
walked towards the long mirror,
saw Friedman approaching.
Whispered Friedman,
screamed FRIEDMAN,
and killed himself.

Dannie Abse

HINNERK EINHORN
b. 1944

KLÄR, FIRST-AID ATTENDANT IN AUSCHWITZ

Why do you torment me?
Why do you ask that way?
There in the gas they hummed like bees and
died a death, green all over the lungs.
I've never injected a cubic
into anyone's heart,
really, they just dropped to their knees.
No one cried,
no one complained,
not the least resistance,
they were just happy.
Why do you torment me,
Why do you ask that way?
I was first-aid attendant

Noted according to a TV-report

Translated from the German by Gabriella Deppert

AUSCHWITZ (1992)

Hair is getting hot
After so many years
Even spectacles are rotting
Shoes suitcases
Mildew corroding
Photographs documents
Yellow gnawing
History
With tears in her eyes
The museum's director conjuring up
the past
Auschwitz may never die
For the sake of those murdered
But who will pay for the upkeep
of the monument
The murderers dead
Or hoary old men with blood
at their hands
Not enough money in their pockets
What about their heirs
They are not guilty
What about us
Why punish us
Is it punishment
To remember and keep the past alive
Forgotten will it be soon enough

Translated from the German by Jochen König

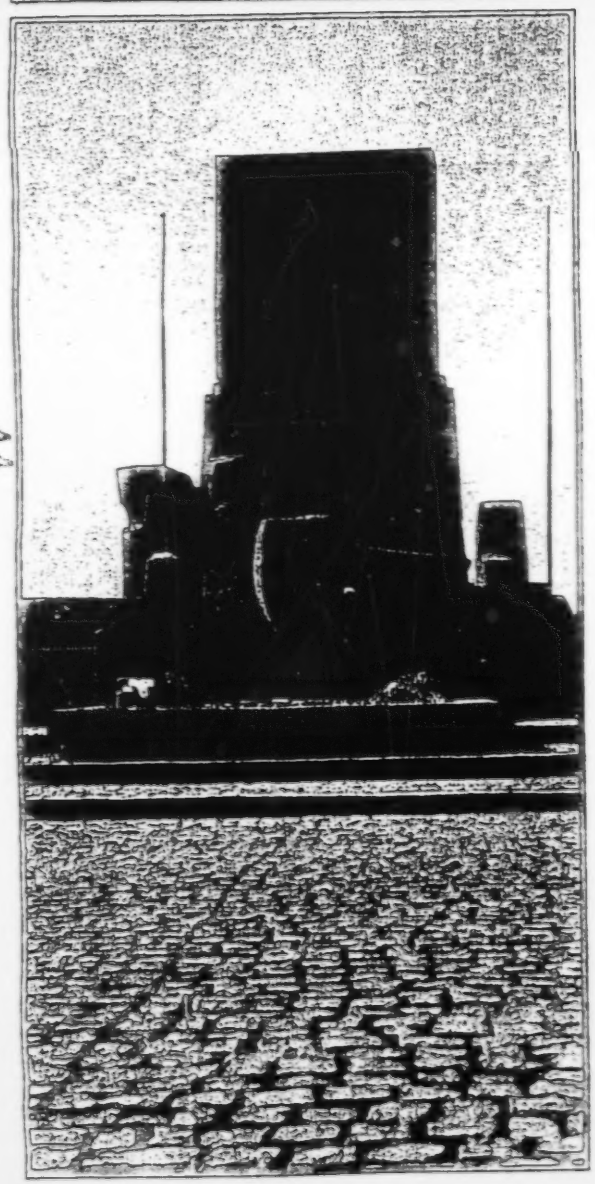
from Holocaust

Jews from Holland, France, and Hungary, and later from
Greece,
were brought to a camp in freight trains or cattle cars –
three or four trains a day –
the cars crowded
and on the road days and nights,
with nothing for those inside
to eat or drink;
and when the cars were at the camp
they were driven out with whips
and blows from the butts of rifles.
They were then lined up before the camp physician
and as they passed before him
he would ask their age of the men – if they did not show it –
and what they did for a living,
and then point with his thumb
to the right or left;
and those sent to the left – all able to work –
were driven barefoot to the camp,
even when snow was on the ground,
and whipped to go faster.
One of the soldiers on guard said as a joke,
pointing to the smoke from the chimneys of the crematorium,
'The only road from here to freedom!'

Some of those sent to the right
would be loaded on vans
with only a single member of an SS squad
seated in front
and were gassed in the van –
if it was that kind –
and their bodies brought straight to the crematorium.
But most would be brought to the gas chambers
behind trees that had been cut down
and set up in rows.

If the gas chambers were crowded
and no room for the youngest children – or even adults –
they were thrown on piles of wood
that had been sprinkled with gasoline
and just burnt alive.
But that their screams might not be too disturbing
to those who worked
an orchestra of Jews from the camp
was set to playing loudly
well-known German songs.
• • •
A woman came with her little daughter
and SS men were there one morning
and took the child away:
a mother was forbidden to keep her child with her.
Later, the woman found out that her child had been thrown
into the fire
in which the dead were being burnt,
and that night threw herself against the electrified barbed wire
fence around the camp.
• • •
In the morning the Jews were lined up by an officer
and the officer told them:
'You are Jews, unworthy of life,
but are now supposed to work.'
They were put upon trucks
and taken away to a forest
and set to digging.
After two or three spadefuls of earth,
the spade of one hit something hard,
and he saw that it was the head of a human being.
There was also a bad smell all around.
He stopped digging
and the officer in charge came towards him shouting:
'Why did you stop?
Didn't you know there are bodies buried here?'
He had opened a mass grave.

STATE MUSEUM IN OŚWIĘCIM



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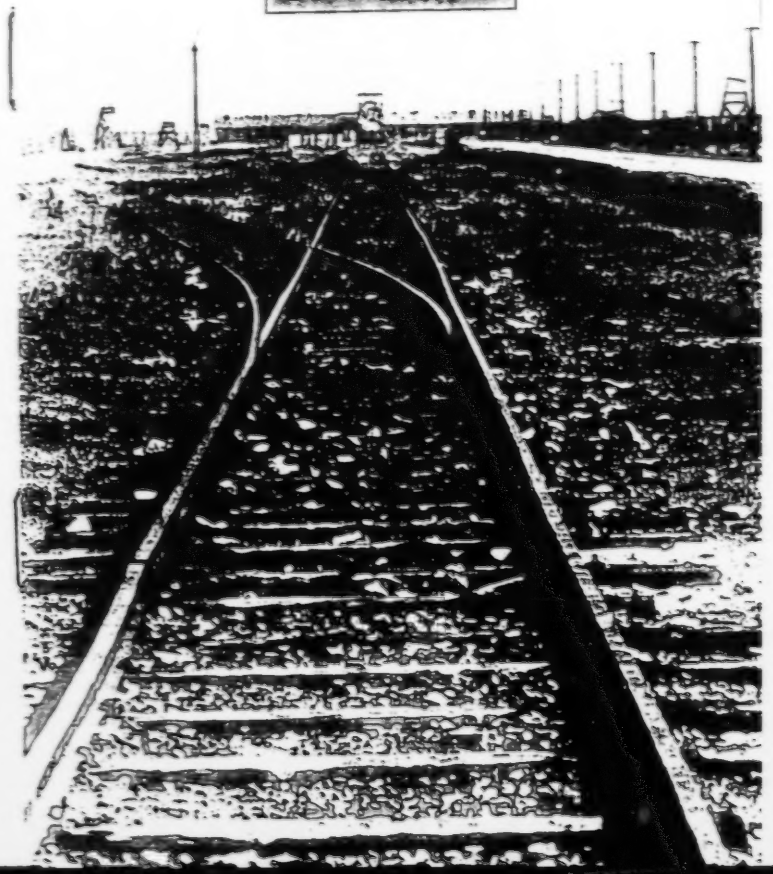
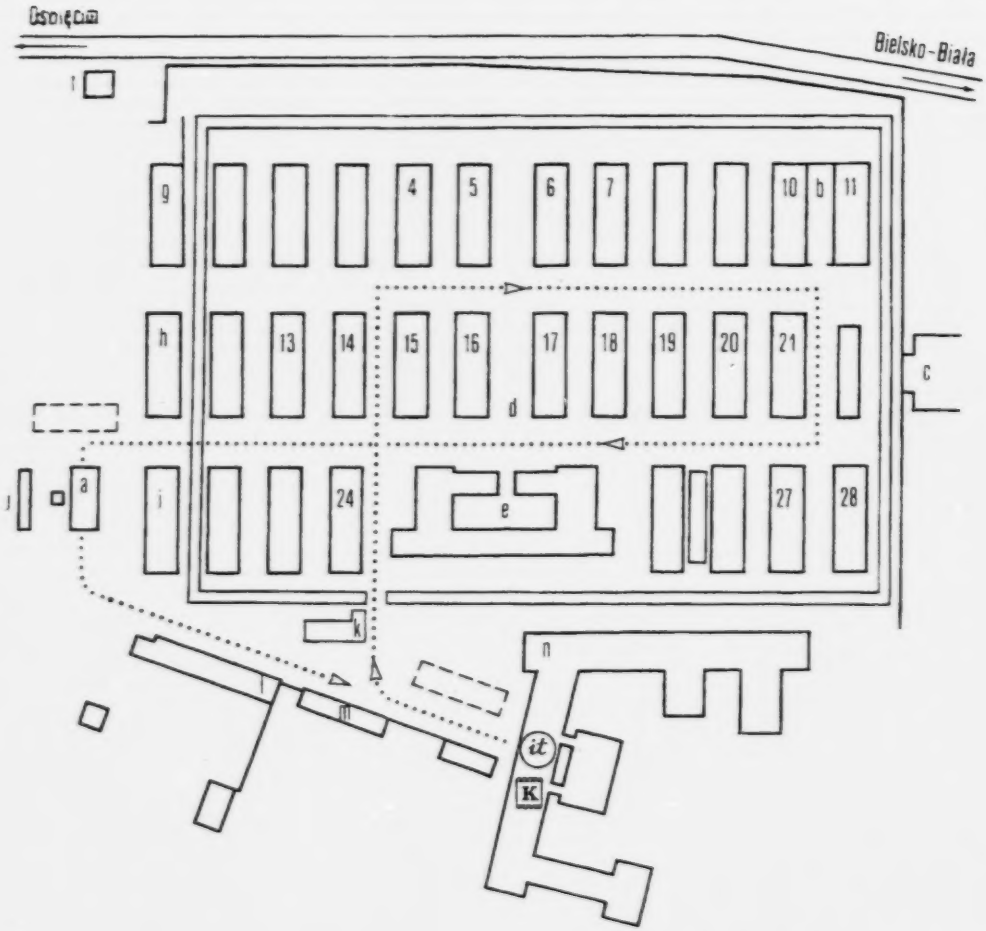
State Museum in Oświęcim

Auschwitz Birkenau

GUIDE-BOOK



PLAN OF THE FORMER CONCENTRATION CAMP
KL AUSCHWITZ I (OŚWIĘCIM)



GENERAL EXHIBITION
- 4 Extermination
- 5 Material Evidence of Crimes
- 6 Everyday Life of the Prisoner
- 7 Living and Sanitary Conditions
- 11 The "Death Block"

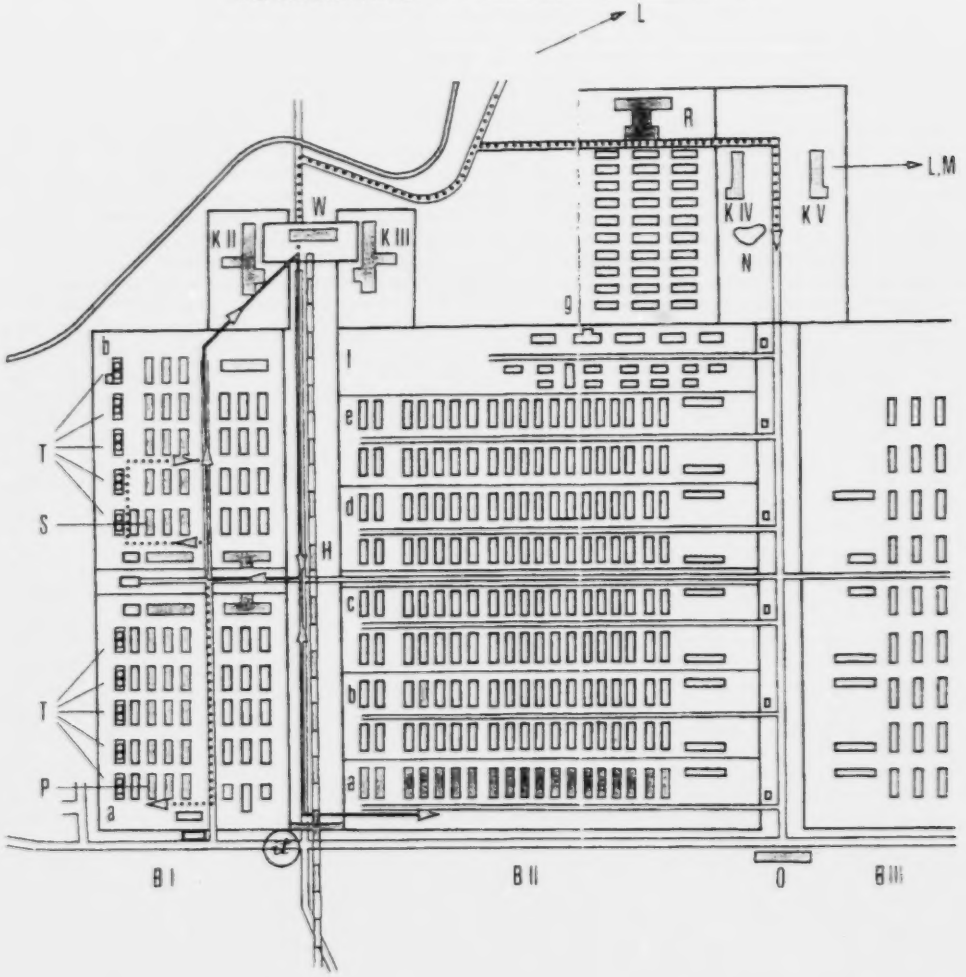
NATIONAL EXHIBITIONS
- 14 U.S.S.R.
- 15 Poland
- 16 Czechoslovakia
- 17 Yugoslavia, Austria
- 18 Hungary
- 20 France, Belgium
- 21 Italy, Holland
- 27 Suffering and Struggle of the Jews

PLACES OF SPECIAL INTEREST
- a Gas Chamber and Crematorium I
- b "Wall of Death"
- c Store containing Cyclon B and property seized from the victims
- d Assembly square and Collective Gallows
- e Camp Kitchen
- f Commandant's House
- g Commandant's Office and Gestapo
- h SS Administration
- i SS Hospital
- j Political Section (Camp Gestapo)
- k SS Guard house and Office of the Camp Supervisor (Lager führer)
- l SS Garages
- m Workshops
- n Reception Building for new prisoners

Block 10 Sterilization experiments

K Cinema

PLAN OF THE FORMER CONCENTRATION CAMP KL AUSCHWITZ II — BIRKENAU (BRZEZINKA)



It Information
Main SS Guard-house — "Death Gate"
BIa Women's camp
BIb In the beginning men's camp, from 1943 women's camp
BIIa Quarantine
BIIb "Family camp" for Jews from Theresienstadt
BIIc Camp for Jews from Hungary
BIId Men's camp
BIIe Gypsy camp
BIII Prisoners' Hospital
BIIIg Storehouse of property taken from murdered vicitims — "Canada"
BIII Camp sector III (under construction) — "Mexico"
H Unloading ramp
KII — V Ruins of the crematoria and gas chambers
L Pits and pyres on which bodies were burned
M Mass graves of Soviet POW's
N Pond into which ashes were tipped
O Commandant's Office
P Block 25 ("Death Block")
R Bath-house ("Sauna")
S Penal Company
T Latrines
W The International Monument to the Victims of Fascism
→ The main route of visiting
····> Additional route of visiting
▭ The camp barracks mantained in original state

For five long years the name of Auschwitz aroused fear among the populations of the Nazi-occupied territories.

It was established in 1940 for the Polish political prisoners. Originally it was to be an instrument of terror and extermination of Poles. As time passed, the Nazis began to deport to the camp people from all over Europe, mainly Jews — citizens of various countries. Soviet prisoners-of-war, Gypsies, Czechs, Yugoslavs, Frenchmen, Austrians, Germans and others were also among the prisoners of Auschwitz. Polish political prisoners were being deported here till the camp ceased to exist.

After the defeat of the September Campaign of 1939, when Polish soldiers had attempted to repel the German invasion, the town of Oświęcim and the surrounding areas were incorporated within the Third Reich. At the same time its name was changed to Auschwitz.

By the end of 1939, at the SS and Police Headquarters in Wrocław (Breslau), the idea of setting up a concentration camp had already been proposed. The official justification for this plan was based on the overcrowding of the existing prisons in Silesia, and on the necessity of conducting further waves of mass arrests among the Polish inhabitants both of Silesia and the rest of German-occupied Poland.

Publishing House of the State Museum
in Oświęcim

Several special committees were convened, whose task it was to consider the most favourable location for such a camp. The ultimate choice fell upon the deserted pre-war Polish barracks in Oświęcim. Situated some distance away from the built up area of the town, they could quite easily be expanded and isolated from the outside world. Another factor not without significance was the convenient position of Oświęcim — an important railway junction — within the existing communications network.

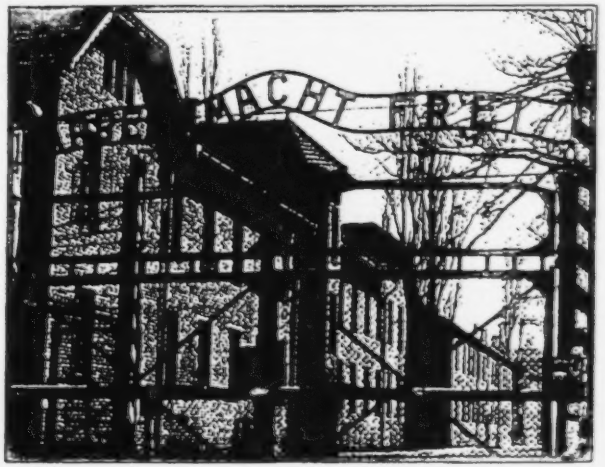
The order to proceed with plans to found a camp was given in April 1940, and Rudolf Höss was appointed its first commandant. On June 14, 1940, the Gestapo dispatched the first political prisoners to KL Auschwitz — 728 Poles from Tarnów.

Initially the camp comprised 20 buildings: 14 at ground level and 6 with an upper floor. During the period from 1941 to 1942 an extra storey was added to all ground-floor buildings and 8 new blocks were constructed, using the prisoners as the work force. Altogether the camp now contained 28 one-storey buildings (excluding kitchens, storehouses etc.). The average number of prisoners fluctuated between 13—16,000, reaching at one stage (during 1942) a record total of 20,000 people. They were accommodated in the blocks, where even the cellars and lofts were utilized for this purpose.

As the number of inmates increased, the area covered by the camp also grew, until it was transformed into a gigantic and horrific factory of death. The monstrosity in Oświęcim — KL Auschwitz I — became the parent or "Stammlager" to a whole generation of new camps. In 1941 the construction of a second camp, later called Auschwitz II — Birkenau, was commenced in the village of Brzezinka 3 kilometres away; and in 1942 the camp in Monowice near Oświęcim — KL Auschwitz III — was established on the territory of the German chemical plant IG-Farbenindustrie. Furthermore, during the years 1942--1944, about 40 smaller branches of the Auschwitz complex came into being; these fell under the jurisdiction of KL Auschwitz III and were situated mainly in the vicinity of steelworks, mines and factories, where prisoners were exploited as cheap labour.

The camps in Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I) and in Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau) are now maintained as museums open to the public.

The most important constructions and objects in Birkenau are: the remnants of four crematoria, gas



Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I). Main gate.

chambers and cremation pits and pyres, the special unloading platform where the deportees were selected and also a pond with human ashes. In Auschwitz such a construction is the "Death Block". Furthermore in both camps are well preserved blocks and a part of prisoners' barracks, the main entrance gates to the camps, sentry watch towers as well as barbed wire fences. Some of the constructions destroyed by the Nazis were rebuilt from the original elements — for instance the ovens in the crematorium I. Some objects were completely destroyed by the SS obliterating the traces of their crimes. In the cases of special importance the constructions were reproduced by the Museum and placed in the same area as they were during the existence of the Auschwitz camp. Above all these are the "Death Wall" and the collective gallows at the roll-call ground.

The prison blocks in the camp at Auschwitz contain exhibitions portraying the history of Auschwitz, or tracing the torments of the various nations whose people were murdered here (see map).

Above the main gate at Auschwitz — through which the prisoners passed each day on their way to work (returning 12 hours or more later) — there is a cynical inscription: "Arbeit macht frei" (Work brings freedom). And on the small square by the kitchen the camp orchestra would play marches, mustering the thousands of prisoners so that they could be counted more efficiently by the SS.

48

BLOCK 4

Room 1

Auschwitz was the biggest Nazi concentration camp for Poles and prisoners from other countries. They were condemned by the hitlerite fascism to isolation and slow extermination by hunger, exhausting work, criminal experiments, or to a quick death as a result of individual and mass executions.

Since 1942 Auschwitz became the biggest center for the mass extermination of European Jews. The majority of Jews deported to Auschwitz were killed in gas chambers immediately on arrival, without registration and without identification with the camp numbers. Therefore it is very difficult to determine precisely the number of people murdered there. For many years this problem has been debated by historians from various countries. They give different numbers, most often to 1,5 million victims. The search for additional documentation is under way to find a more precise number.

The urn containing a handful of human ashes, gathered from the territory of Birkenau, commemorates the dead.

Room 2

In Auschwitz met their death citizens of many countries, people of various political convictions and religions, civilians, members of resistance organizations and prisoners-of-war alike.

In 1941 SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler singled out the camp in Auschwitz as the site for the proposed total eradication of the Jewish population. The motives behind this decision were made clear by the camp commandant Rudolf Höss in his "Reminiscences", where he quotes the words of Himmler himself: "The existing extermination centres in the East are not sufficient to cope with an operation on such a scale. Therefore I have designated Auschwitz for this purpose, both because of its convenient location as regards communication, and because the area can be easily isolated and camouflaged". By spring 1942 the campaign aimed at the mass murder of Jews was already in progress. The first transports of the condemned were brought to KL Auschwitz from the eastern part of Upper Silesia, then from the rest of occupied Poland. By the spring large consignments began to arrive from Slovakia and France, later from Belgium and Holland, and in the autumn from Germany, Norway, Lithuania and so in turn from all the countries of occupied Europe.

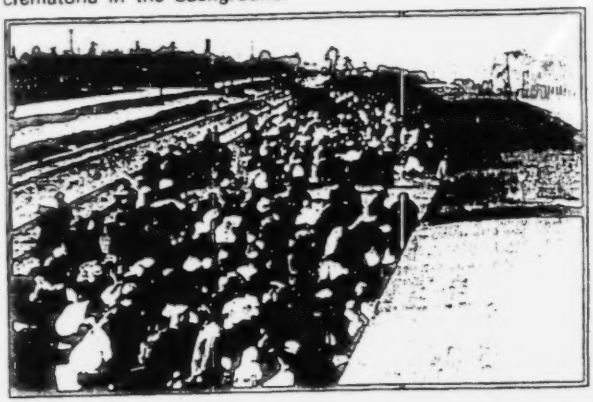
Almost immediately after the Nazi aggression against the Soviet Union, Soviet prisoners-of-war were sent to Auschwitz, in complete contravention of international law. On the basis of the numbers issued to camp inmates it has been established that 12,000 Soviet P.O.W.'s were registered here. During the first 5 months 8,320 of these perished. Some were gassed, others were shot, while the remainder died from sheer emaciation. One of the proofs of this particular crime is the original Book of Deaths, now kept in the Museum Archives. Photocopies of several pages are on show in the display case. Attention should be drawn to the columns in which, at 5-10 minutes intervals, fictitious causes and times of death were registered.

KL Auschwitz was also the scene for the extermination of approx. 21,000 Gypsies. Evidence of this crime is contained in the records relating to the Gypsy camp, which were stolen by prisoners then produced after the war. Some photocopies taken from these are also on display.

Room 3

Most of the Jews condemned to extinction in KL Auschwitz arrived convinced that they had been deported for "resettlement" in Eastern Europe. In particular Jews from Greece and Hungary were deceived in this way: the Nazis sold them non-existent plots of land, farms, shops or offered them work in fictitious factories. For this reason the deportees always brought their most valuable possessions with them.

Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau). A transport of Jews from Hungary reaches the unloading ramp. Chimneys of the crematoria in the background.



Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau). Selection of deported Jews by SS physicians.

The distance between place of arrest and KL Auschwitz was sometimes as much as 2,400 km (1,500 miles). The journey was usually made in sealed goods wagons. No food was provided. Crowded together like cattle, deportees often travelled for 7 or even 10 days before reaching their final destination. Therefore, not surprisingly, when the bolts were drawn on arrival at the camp it was frequently the case that some of the victims — above all old people and children — were already dead, while the rest were in a state of extreme exhaustion.

The trains unloaded at the goods station in Auschwitz, while from 1944 a special ramp built at Birkenau was used. Here officers and doctors of the SS immediately examined the newarrivals, allocating those capable of work to the camp. Those considered unsuitable were taken straight to the gas chambers. According to the statement of Rudolf Höss, around 70-75% of the total were summarily gassed in this way.

On display in this room are a number of enlargements of original photographs, belonging to an album of about 200 pictures, taken in 1944 by one of the SS men in Birkenau during extermination of Jews from Hungary.

On the map showing the lay-out of the Auschwitz "Factory of Death", the spots where mass crimes were committed by the Nazis are marked in red (ie. places of execution by firing squad, gas chambers, crematoria, cremation pits and pyres).

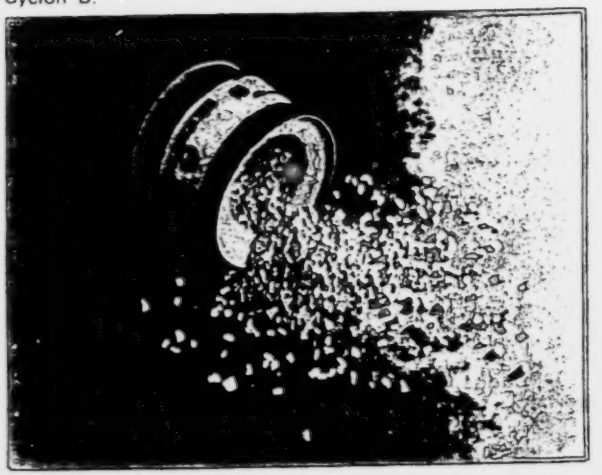
Room 4

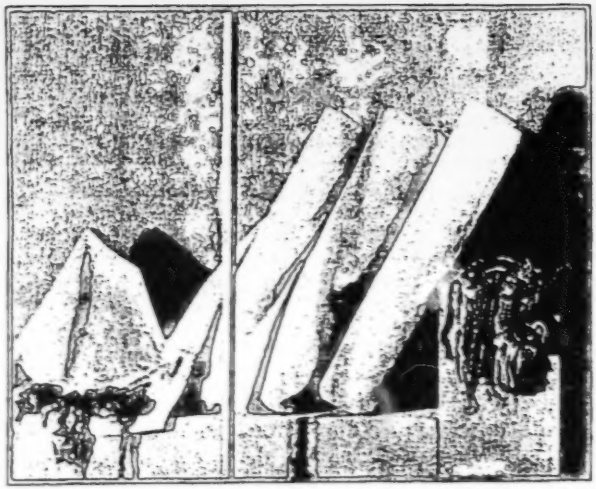
By comparing the technical drawings (which fortunately escaped destruction by the SS) of the gas chambers and crematoria — as well as the actual ruins of these installations — with the accounts of ex-prisoners and of the former commandant R. Höss, it is possible to reconstruct the exact process of extermination.

On the model of the gas chamber and crematorium II we see people entering the underground changing room. They are composed, because after the initial "selection" (ie. segregation into fit and unfit for work) all have been assured by the SS that they would be allowed a bath.They are told to undress, after which they are herded into a second underground chamber resembling a bathroom. Showers were fitted to the ceiling — but they were never connected to the water supply. Into this room, 210 sq.m in area (approx. 235 sq. yards), around 2,000 victims would be led. After the doors had been firmly closed, SS men poured the substance Cyclon B into the chamber through special openings in the ceiling. Within 15-20 minutes the people trapped inside died. After gold tooth fillings, rings, ear-rings and also the hair had been removed from the bodies, they were taken to the incinerators situated on the ground floor, or — if these could not cope with the mass of human flesh — to makeshift "funeral pyres".

On the walls of this display room there are three photographs. Taken in secret and at great risk by one of the camp inmates in 1944, they show some women being driven into the gas chamber, and the burning of corpses on a cremation pyre.

Cyclon B.





Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I) Block 4. Part of the exhibition — haircloth made of human hair.

Cyclon B was produced by the firm "Degesch", whose profits from sales of the gas for 1941-1944 were almost 300.000 marks. In Oświęcim alone, during, the period from 1942 to 1943, about 20,000 kilograms (almost 20 ton) of Cyclon B was used. According to camp commandant Höss, 5-7 kg of the poison was needed to kill around 1,500 people. After liberation piles of empty cans, as well as a number of containers still full of the deadly crystals, were found in the camp warehouses. In the display stand containing some crystals of Cyclon B a number of documents are also exhibited. These are orders authorizing the collection by lorry of fresh supplies from the factory in Dessau. In the documents false reasons are given for the use of Cyclon — for example, in order to assist the "resettlement of Jews".

Room 5

On liberating the camp in Oświęcim the Soviet Army discovered approx. 7,000 kg (7 tons) of hair, packed tightly into bags, in the camp warehouses. These were the remains which the camp authorities had not yet managed to sell and send to factories inside the Reich. Analyses conducted by the Institute of Forensic Research in Cracow revealed that the hair contained traces of hydrogen cyanide (prussic acid), the basic poisonous component of the compounds known as cyclons. The products for which German firms used human hair included tailor's lining (haircloth). Bales of haircloth — recovered from the town of Kietrz and now on show in this part of the Museum — were analysed by the Institute of Forensic Medicine and found to originate from human hair, probably that of women.

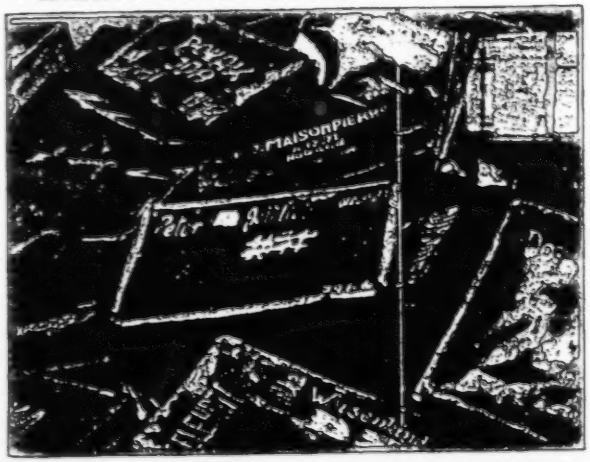
Gold fillings were removed from the teeth of the corpses and melted into ingots, which were then sent to the SS Health and Sanitation Head Office. Human ashes were used as fertilizer, and for filling in nearby ponds or river beds.

Room 6

All personal effects brought to the camp by the deportees were sorted, stored and subsequently transported to the Fatherland for use by the SS, the Wehrmacht or civilians. The SS men who manned and guarded the camp also benefited from the property of murdered victims. They approached the camp commander asking for prams, baby clothes and other things. Despite the fact that trains constantly departed for Germany full of plundered goods the storehouses were always full to overflowing; sometimes unsorted luggage was even left to pile up between them.

In connection with the advance of the Soviet Army, the stores were hastily emptied and the most valuable objects sent elsewhere. A few days before the liberation

Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I). Block 5. Part of the exhibition — suitcases with the names of deportees.



— in a desperate attempt to obliterate all traces of their crimes — SS men set fire to the warehouses. Thirty warehouses burnt down. After the liberation of the camp thousands pairs of shoes and spectacles were found together with clothes, brushes, bowls etc.

BLOCK 5

The various exhibition halls of Block 5 contain objects found after liberation. These include: Jewish prayer shawls, tooth-brushes, shaving-brushes, shoes, suitcases with the names and addresses of the deported Jews, bowls, artificial limbs, spectacles etc...

BLOCK 6

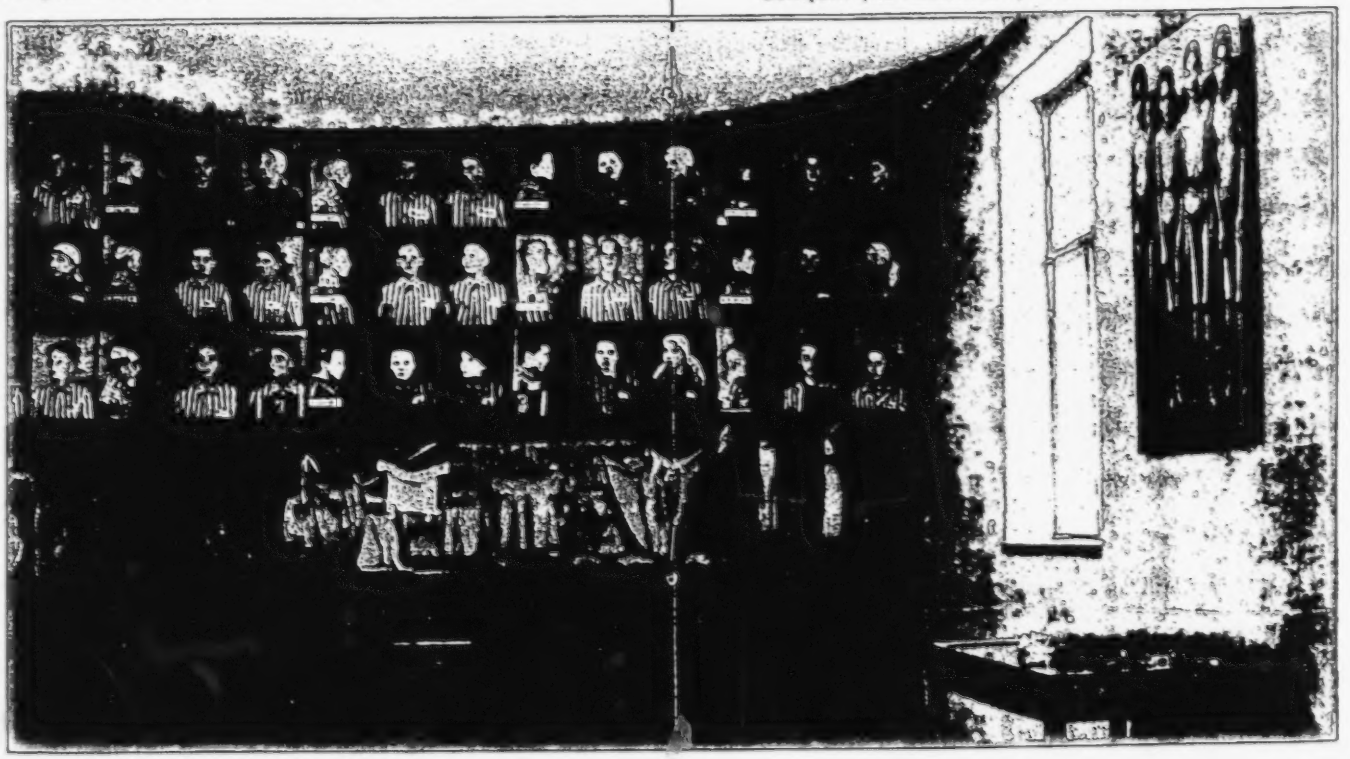
Room 1

Some of the prisoners from the transports arriving at KL Auschwitz were admitted — without prior selection — straight to the camp, where they perished from hunger, executions, hard labour, punishments, or as a result of the appalling sanitary conditions. On the very first day the camp supervisor would announce that they had "come to a concentration camp, from which the only way to escape is through the crematorium chimney". Also those few from the mass Jewish transports whom SS physicians considered able-bodied were sent to the camp.

The newcomers had their clothes and personal possessions confiscated, their hair was cut short, they were sprayed with disinfectant, bathed, then finally given a number and registered. Initially the prisoners were photographed in 3 poses, while from 1943 they were tattooed. KL Auschwitz was the only Nazi camp where the inmates were labelled by tattooing.

Depending on the reason for the arrest, prisoners were marked with different coloured triangles, which were sewn onto their camp clothes together with their number.

Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I). Block 6. Part of the exhibition.



Some inmates wore red triangles denoting political prisoners. Jewish prisoners were given a star made of a yellow triangle and the one corresponding to the reason of their arrest. Black triangles were given to Gypsies and prisoners regarded by hitlerites as antisocial. Jehovas' Witnesses got violet triangles, homosexuals pink and criminals green.

The thin prison clothes (the so-called "stripes") were never intended to give protection from the cold. Underwear was changed at intervals of several weeks or even months; nor was it possible for the prisoners to do their own washing. This situation led to outbreaks of various diseases, especially typhus, typhoid fever and scabies.

Room 2

For the entire period during which KL Auschwitz devoured human life, the camp records contain information to approx. 400,000 men and women of different nationalities, including Soviet P.O.W.'s, prisoners in "corrective custody", and the immates of Block 11 (which was placed at the disposal of the Gestapo Police Court in Katowice).

With monotonous and merciless regularity the camp clock timed the life of every inmate. From morning to evening bell, from one bowl of soup to the next, from the first assembly to the roll-call at which the prisoner's body is counted for the last time.

Room 3

Besides executions and the gas chambers, another efficient means of killing off the prisoners was hard labour. Prisoners were employed in various sectors of the economy. Initially they worked on the development of the camp itself — levelling the terrain and building new blocks, huts, roads, drainage dikes etc. Later the industry of the Third Reich began to exploit this source of manpower to an ever greater degree.

The prisoners were often made to work at a run, without a moment's respite. The rapid pace, hunger rations, constant beating, harassment and general hardships greatly increased the death rate. Or it might happen that a prisoner's place of work became the scene of his death at the hands of the SS or their assistants (criminal offenders held at Auschwitz alongside political prisoners). The return to camp of the work teams — dragging their colleagues or pushing them on wheel-barrows and carts, after they had been killed or wounded by blows from clubs and spades — was a terrible sight.

Working with the roller, of which a model is exhibited here, was particularly back-breaking.

First choice in obtaining prisoners for work belonged to the German firm IG-Farbenindustrie, which built a synthetic rubber and petrol plant, the Buna-werke, in Monowice near Oświęcim. Most of the Auschwitz sub-camps were founded nearby metalworks, mines and factories. Prison labour was used in the production of coal, arms and chemical products, or to build and extend industrial plants.

Room 4

A day's food ration amounted to 1,300-1,700 calories. For breakfast a prisoner would receive 1/2 litre of "coffee" and for dinner 1 litre (nearly 2 pints) of meatless soup, often cooked from rotten vegetables. Supper consisted of 300-350 grammes (10-12 ozs) of black clayey bread, 30 g (just over 1 ounce) of margarine, 20 g of sausage and some herbal tea or "coffee".

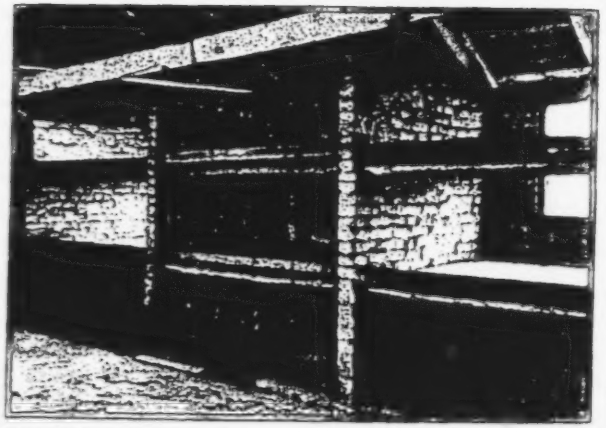
Hard work and hunger caused complete physical exhaustion. The camp inmates developed starvation sickness, which often ended in death. The photographs hanging on the walls, taken immediately after liberation, show some of the women prisoners who weighed only 23-30 kg (50-65 lbs).

Room 5

It is difficult for us to imagine the tragic scenes which took place daily in the camp. Artists among the ex-prisoners have endeavoured to convey the atmosphere of those times in their creative work. These are their "sworn statements", submitted in visual form. This is their evidence, testimony given in an artistic way presenting different scenes from camp life. The Museum possesses a rich collection of such works.

Room 6

Children were sent to Auschwitz together with adults. They were first of all Jews, Gypsies but also Poles and Russians. They were treated in the same way as adults. Majority of them died in gas chambers soon after the arrival to the camp. The selected few were sent to the camp where they found the same conditions and restrictions as adults. Some children, like for instance twins, served as objects of criminal experiments. Others had to work hard. The children sent to the camp were registered and denominated often as political prisoners. Their photographs and the photographs of the children liberated by the Soviet Army are shown here.



Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau). Interior of a brick barrack.

BLOCK 7

Ground floor

The living conditions, although they varied to some extent during the different stages of the camp's existence, were always unbearable. The first train-loads of prisoners slept on straw scattered over the concrete floors; later straw mattresses were introduced. In a dormitory which was barely adequate for 40-50 persons, an average of 200 prisoners would be housed. Nor were the living quarters improved to any appreciable extent by the installation of three-tier bunks, made out of boards. Each level was occupied by two prisoners. The only covers were pieces of dirty, threadbare blankets. Prisoners entrusted with certain special functions enjoyed slightly better conditions, perhaps receiving separate accommodation.

In the main camp the majority of the prisoners lived in brick-built one-storey blocks, while in Birkenau they were housed in barracks with no foundations, erected on the marshy ground. The model reproducing a fragment of a brick building of this type — made to a scale of 1:1 — illustrates the primitive conditions prevailing in Birkenau.

Room 6

Upper floor

Photographs and models of the 2 kinds of buildings used at Birkenau — made either of brick or of wood — give some indication of the standard of sanitation in the camp.

Room 7

Upper floor

The malarial climate of Oświęcim, the appalling living quarters, hunger, inadequate clothing (too thin to keep out the cold, seldom changed and never washed), rats and insects were the causes of various illnesses and epidemics which decimated the camp population. The large numbers of the sick reporting to the camp hospital could not be accommodated because of overcrowding. Therefore SS doctors conducted selections among the patients (both sick and convalescent) in the hospital, as well as among the weaker prisoners living in the other blocks. Those with little chance of a quick recovery were immediately sent to their deaths in the gas chambers, or were murdered in the hospital by means of phenol, injected into the heart. For this reason the prisoners often called the hospital the "anteroom of the crematorium".

As in other camps, the SS doctors of KL Auschwitz performed many cruel experiments on the prisoners. For example, the SS Dr. C. Clauberg made tests involving sterilisation on Jewish women in Block Nr 10 in Stammlager Auschwitz I in order to develop efficient method for biological extermination of the nations, mainly Slavs. Dr Joseph Mengele experimented on twins and handicapped people, as part of a programme of genetic and anthropological research. Also, various tests entailing the application of new medical or chemical preparations were made in Auschwitz. Toxic substances were rubbed into the skin of prisoners and painful skin transplants were performed. Hundreds of men and women died during these experiments, while those who survived suffered serious damage to their health, if not permanent disabilities.

BLOCK 11 — THE "DEATH BLOCK"

This block was a prison within a prison, completely isolated from the rest of the camp. The ground floor and cellars are preserved in their original form.

The courtyard between blocks 10 and 11 is enclosed on two sides by a high wall. The wooden blinds on the windows of block 10 were installed to prevent observation of the executions taking place here. At this "Wall of Death" the SS shot thousands of prisoners, mostly Poles. In the yard in front of block 11, SS men administered punishments in the form of flogging or hanging prisoners to a special stake by their arms, which were bent behind their backs.

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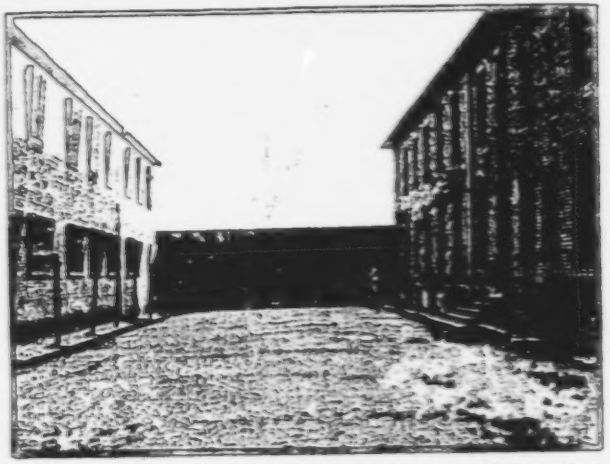


Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I). The Execution Wall.

Ground floor

In the first room on the right the SS officer on duty would sit. In the adjacent rooms on both sides prisoners awaiting the verdict of the Gestapo Police Court, which travelled to KL Auschwitz from Katowice, were held. At one session which lasted from 2 to 3 hours (in the first room on the left) the court might issue from a few dozen to more than a hundred death sentences. The condemned were then led out to the Wall of Death for execution. Before they were shot, all the victims were made to undress; this took place in the two washrooms (half way down the corridor) where, if the number was small enough, the executions were carried out on the spot. In the last room to the left there are photographs of paintings by a former prisoner Władysław Siwek, which show the proceedings of the summary court, selections in the cellars and executions in the courtyard of block 11.

The system of punishments applied by the SS in Hitler's concentration camps was part of a carefully planned programme, aimed at the premeditated annihilation of prisoners. A prisoner could be punished for literally anything: for picking apples, for relieving himself during working hours, for extracting his own gold tooth and bartering it for bread, or for working too slowly in the eyes of his SS overseer. The punishments took many different forms: flogging, hanging from the stake by the hands, confinement in the cells of Block 11, extra toil, physical exercises, prolonged standing or

assignment to the special penal companies. The exhibition here includes the original whipping-stool used in flogging, one of the stakes for hanging up prisoners, as well as the portable gallows on which the death penalty was sometimes carried out. Prisoners allocated to penal squads received reduced food rations and were forced to perform the hardest tasks, for example: clearing fish ponds of rushes, digging drainage dikes and levelling the ground.

In the last room to the right the fate of police and correction prisoners is shown. They were sent to Auschwitz and treated as a separate category of prisoners.

The Cellars

In September 1941 experiment was conducted here, involving the mass killing of people with Cyclon B. On these occasions 600 Soviet P.O.W.'s and 250 of the sick from the camp hospital perished.

The underground cells were used both for camp inmates and for civilians, suspected of maintaining contacts with prisoners or of helping them to escape. They also housed prisoners sentenced to death by starvation for the escape of a comrade; or those whom the SS considered guilty of breaking camp rules and who thus had to undergo interrogation.

The camp authorities conducted periodic selections known as "cleaning out the bunkers" (as these underground cells were called). The prisoners unfortunate enough to be picked were either shot or sent to work in a penal brigade. In the cellars we find three types of punishment cells (although most were of the ordinary kind, where prisoners were kept during "enquiries"). Cell no 18 is one of those in which prisoners condemned to death by starvation were locked.

In 1941 the camp authorities put there the Polish monk Father Maximilian Kolbe, who had given his life for another prisoner. Cell no 20 was a dark room, completely sealed, where cases of death by suffocation were not unknown. In cell 21 drawings made by one of its inmates can still be seen. Cell 22 contains 4 small cubicles (standing cells), measuring 90 x 90 cm (approx. 1 sq. yard). In each of these 4 prisoners, undergoing special punishment, were placed.

Resistance

Despite the harsh living conditions, despite the constant terror and the threat of reprisals, the prisoners managed to conspire against the SS. This activity assumed a variety of forms. Contacts with the Polish

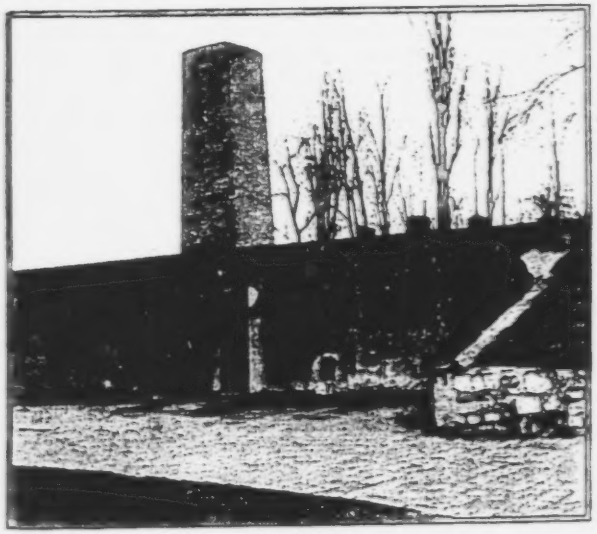
inhabitants of the neighbouring regions enabled packages containing food or medicine to be smuggled in to the camp inmates, while there was a reverse traffic in information concerning the crimes committed by the SS. Lists with the names of prisoners and SS men, as well as evidences of crimes, reached the outside world. All communications were concealed in specially constructed objects, and correspondence between the camp and centres of the resistance movement in Poland were written in code. One of the most important objectives of this illegal organization was to undermine the position of the criminal offenders, entrusted with special duties by the SS. Efforts were made to gradually remove such persons, who collaborated blindly with the Nazi oppressors, from their posts and to replace them with political prisoners.

Moreover, a propaganda campaign was conducted by activists among the prisoners, in order to cultivate a spirit of international solidarity against fascism. Besides this the camp inmates engaged in various forms of cultural activity, holding secret discussions and meetings, recitations of national poetry, religious services etc. Of particular interest in this respect was the vigorous development of a camp "underground art".

ASSEMBLY SQUARE

During roll-calls the SS counted the prisoners and carried out executions on the portable gallows, or on the collective gallows a reconstruction of which can be seen here.

Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I). Collective gallows.



Oświęcim (KL Auschwitz I). Crematorium 1.

On July 19, 1943, twelve Poles were hanged here for having contacts with civilians outside the camp, and for assisting in the escape of three fellow prisoners.

THE CREMATORIUM AND GAS CHAMBER

The crematorium is situated outside the main fence of the camp. In front of the entrance — in the place where the building of the camp Gestapo once stood — we see the gallows used on April 16, 1947, to hang the first commandant Rudolf Höss.

The largest room in the crematorium was the mortuary, which was converted into a temporary gas chamber. During the years 1941 and 1942 Soviet P.O.W.'s, as well as Jews from the ghettos formed by the Nazis in Upper Silesia, were killed here.

The other part of the crematorium houses two of the three furnaces, which could burn approx. 350 bodies daily. In each retort 2-3 corpses at a time were placed. The crematorium was built by the firm Topf und Sohne from Erfurt, the same which in 1942 and 1943 installed the furnaces in the 4 crematoria at Birkenau. The name of the firm is visible on some of the metal parts. Crematorium I was working from 1940 to 1943. The ovens were rebuilt by the Museum from the original German metal elements.

Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau). Main gate.

KL AUSCHWITZ II — BIRKENAU (BRZEZINKA)

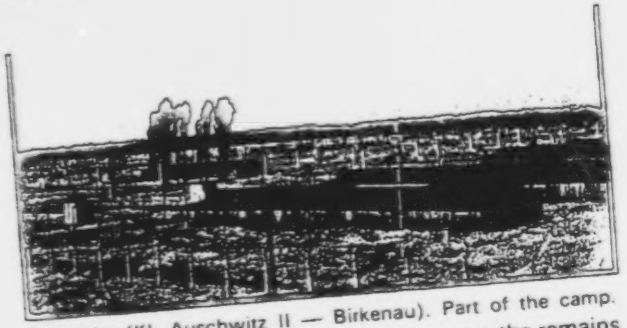
At a distance of 3 km from the main camp, in the village of Brzezinka, the camp of Birkenau — KL Auschwitz II — was situated. Covering approximately 175 hectares (s. 425 acres), it contained over 300 buildings. Of these, 45 made of brick and 22 of wood have survived almost intact. In the places where the other buildings previously stood (these were either burnt down or demolished) only the hearths remain. However, their outlines on the ground are clearly visible, giving us a good idea of their original size and number.

The camp in Birkenau was divided into several fields and sectors, which in fact constituted separate camps (see map). The total number of men and women prisoners reached approx. 100,000 in August 1944. The camp inmates were plagued by a lack of water, terrible sanitary conditions and huge numbers of rats. It was on the territory of Birkenau that the Nazis constructed most of their instruments of mass destruction, namely: 4 crematoria with gas chambers, two makeshift gas chambers in specially converted farmhouses, cremation pyres and pits.

Visitors to the former camp in Birkenau should follow the marked route, which covers the entire area. The best place to begin is the main watch tower of the SS, where recorded commentaries in 12 languages can be heard, and from which there is an excellent view over the whole prison complex (the largest of all the camps of mass extermination). Opposite the tower the railway unloading platform can be seen, where most of the deported Jews from Hungary arrived.

In Birkenau we have the opportunity to view the prisoners' living quarters as they really were. The brick barracks are situated to the left of the unloading ramp. They were built without foundations, directly on the swampy ground. Most of these had no floor at all, apart from the compressed earth which often turned into a veritable quagmire. The brick barracks housed the women prisoners, who slept on three-tier berths spread over with rotting straw. On one level an average of 8 persons would lie.

The wooden buildings had once served as field stables for 52 horses. After a minimum of modifications had been made, they were used to accommodate up to 1,000 prisoners. Chimney flues were built inside, and the smoke passing through them was supposed to heat the whole interior.



Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau). Part of the camp.

At the end of the unloading ramp there are the remains of 2 crematoria and gas chambers, blown up by the retreating SS men in an attempt to conceal their criminal activities. In the ruins it is still possible to discern the underground changing room, where the victims were made to undress, the gas chamber, and, on the surface, we can see 5 large hollows left by the furnaces, as well as the rails along which the corpses were pushed.

Crematorium IV was partially destroyed by Jewish prisoners during the revolt on the 7th October 1944.

Between the ruins of crematoria II and III there stands the International Monument to the Victims of Auschwitz, which was ceremonially unveiled in April 1967.

Brzezinka (KL Auschwitz II — Birkenau). Ruins of the crematorium.

Guidelines For The 1998 "Elie Wiesel Student Writing Competition"

Senior Division Guidelines: (Grades 9th – 12th)

The senior division competition will be a written essay referring to one of several quotes related to the Holocaust.

We invite you to submit an essay using one of the following quotes or questions as the unifying theme. Choose examples from historical materials or literature to support ideas.

The essay should be an original work written specifically for this competition and should be a maximum of four pages typed and double-spaced. The quote or question you choose should appear on the cover page along with the following information:

Name:
Grade:
School:
Teacher:
Date:

1998 "Elie Wiesel Writing Competition" Quotes for the Senior Division

Submit an essay using one of the following quotes as the unifying theme:

1. ***"The World is too dangerous to live in – not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen." ___Albert Einstein***

2. **In a tiny mountain village of south central France, Le Chambon, people hid and saved 6,000 Jews during the Holocaust. Magda Trocme, wife of the Quaker minister of Le Chambon, said,**

"Remember that in your life there will be lots

of circumstances that will need a kind of courage, a kind of decision of your own, not about other people but about yourself."

3. ***"In Germany, the Nazis came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak." ___Pastor Martin Niemoeller***

4. ***"Let us not forget, after all, there is always a moment when the moral choice is made." ___Elie Wiesel***

5. **In the Ascent of Man, scientist Jacob Bronowski disagrees with those who would blame technology for the atrocities committed at Auschwitz and other death camps. He said,**

   "This is the concentration camp and crematorium at Auschwitz. This is where people were turned into numbers…And that was not done by gas. It was done by arrogance. It was done by dogma. It was done by ignorance. When people believe that they have absolute knowledge, with no test in reality, this is how they behave. This is what men do when they aspire to the knowledge of gods."

6. ***"The great masses of the people…will more easily fall victim to a big lie than to a small one." ___Adolf Hitler***

7. **Education is surely one of the most important vehicles in shaping the character of a nation. A German recalled the day he was asked to pledge loyalty to the regime:**

   "There I was, in 1935, a perfect example of the kind of person who, with all his advantages in birth, in education, and in position rules in any country. If I had refused to take the oath in 1935, meant that all the thousands, hundreds of thousands, like me in Germany were also unprepared….Thus the world was lost…My education did not help me, and I had a broader and better education than most men have had or ever will have."

8. ***"Democracy is not an ideal state, but simply a state in which the forces of good have a free field against the forces of evil." ___Carl Schultz***

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Cristabel
Cold Days
David
The Diary of Ann Frank
A Day in October
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Your school gets from 8-10 catalogues of films and documentaries---many of them contain films of W.W.II and the Holocaust that you can purchase and built up a video library.

The film Night and Fog and Europa, Europa have both won Academy Awards for the best documentary and best foreign picture of the year.

RIGHT Barracks

POLAND

Auschwitz Pilgrimage

A visitor seeks understanding at the vast Nazi death camp.

BY LYNN SHERR 8

Photographs by Julie Denesha for The New York Times

New York Time
Travel Section
8/18/2002

Anguished Cries In a Place of Silence

The Auschwitz-Birkenau complex is now a pilgrimage site for half a million visitors a year

By LYNN SHERR

IT was smaller than I'd imagined, a black iron portal of human dimensions rather than the monstrous symbol of terror it has become. But the cynical words arching overhead, "ARBEIT MACHT FREI," or "Work Makes You Free," transported me directly into the footsteps of those who had once shuffled into Auschwitz with no hope of leaving alive. Our guide pointed to the hand-made sign: "Look at the 'B' in "ARBEIT," he said. "It's upside down. A prisoner's rebellion — a sign of resistance." It was one of the only moments of triumph for the next five and a half hours.

I had come to Auschwitz to pay my respects, to touch the horror I had been spared only because my grandparents left Poland when the tyrant was the Czar, not Hitler. I went home convinced that everyone ought to visit. To feel. To bear witness. To preserve the lesson.

The death camp known during World War II as Konzentrationslager Auschwitz I is today Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, a sprawling monument to Nazi depravity and global neglect in southern Poland. This complex was the largest of the lagers, ultimately encompassing a chain of subcamps, and was responsible for the systematic murders of nearly 1.5 million people, almost all Jews, from the day it opened in June 1940 until the Soviet liberation in January 1945. Now it is less a tourist spot than a pilgrimage site for an estimated half a million visitors a year. Poles, Americans and Germans are the most numerous; many visitors are Jews, looking for traces of lost relatives or, like me, for a moment to mourn. Groups of German schoolchildren also come, to help maintain the museum by cutting the grass and doing other odd jobs as volunteers. "It is very hard for the German kids," the museum's Polish deputy director, Krystyna Oleska, told me in an interview before my tour.

I started my trip in Krakow, where my companions hired a car and driver for the 45-minute drive southwest, mostly on the well-maintained A-4 toll road through gentle hills and past small brick houses. The ordinariness was jarring: taking a taxi to a concentration camp on a gorgeous, warm day last August. But when we passed the first set of railroad tracks, my blood ran cold. That was how prisoners arrived 60 years ago. In fact, the camp was built here precisely because of the conjunction of major railroad lines in the town of Oswiecim, which the Third Reich renamed Auschwitz after occupying Poland in 1939.

My first impression of the camp itself was its vastness — nearly 50 acres of barracks, barbed wire, watch towers and a crematorium, all still menacing despite decades of abandonment. I fell uncharacteristically silent. And I wasn't the only one. There were several large groups there when I visited — Japanese tourists and French boy scouts among them. Few were laughing or posing.

Instead, we proceeded along the neat rows of barracks, or blocks, with their exhibits on camp life. And death. The blocks themselves are red brick, two-story buildings, each designed to house 700 prisoners. In reality, each held up to 2,000, crammed so tight on concrete floors that at night, according to our guide, "when one turned, all had to turn." The toilets were lidless and doorless; the sinks, long troughs. This was where the lucky ones lived, or rather existed, while they worked in the fields or factories nearby.

I thought of the words of Primo Levi, the Italian chemist and writer who spent nearly

The New York Times

a year here: "It is not possible to sink lower than this; no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it conceivably be so."

One display shows the variety of tattoos used at Auschwitz, the only camp to use them; another, the train tickets the Nazis sold (yes, sold) to prisoners for their trip to the camp. An immense array of prison cards (häftlingskarten) listed not only a person's name and usual statistics, but also the shape of his or her face (including eyes, nose, ears, teeth and lips) and the reason for the arrest. One poor soul's offense was "helping Jews"; another's, "listening to foreign radio station."

The Nazi compulsion to document atrocities is stunning, the deceit infuriating. Death records for Russian prisoners of war — exterminated for being soldiers, not Jews — are recorded in black ink with a steady hand, noting precisely the time of execution: 8 p.m., 8:05, 8:10, 8:45. One book records the names of 22,000 Gypsy victims, including their children born at Auschwitz. A postcard to the Red Cross from a Czech Jew — forced to write in German — reads: "I am in good health, I feel good."

And then there is the hair. On the second floor of Block 4, in a case some 20 yards long, are layer after layer of braids and tresses and curls, all gone gray now but once blond and brown and black and auburn. The hair weighs more than two tons, less than a third of what the Allied troops originally found. Hair was sold to be woven into textiles; gold fillings from teeth went to the German treasury.

Each display was more dreadful than the last, but the one that hit me hardest was the

LYNN SHERR is a correspondent for the ABC News program "20/20."

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The Nuremberg Laws

A conference of ministers was held on August 20, 1935, to discuss the economic effects of Party actions against Jews. Adolf Wagner, the Party representative at the conference, argued that such actions would cease, once the Government decided on a firm policy against the Jews.

Dr. Schacht, the Economics Minister, criticized arbitrary behavior by Party members as this inhibited his policy of rebuilding Germany's economy. It made no economic sense since Jews had certain entrepreneurial skills that could be usefully employed to further his policies. Schacht made no moral condemnation of Jewish policy and advocated the passing of legislation to clarify the situation.

The following month two measures were announced at the annual Party Rally in Nuremberg, becoming known as the Nuremberg Laws. Both measures were hastily improvised (there was even a shortage of drafting paper so that menu cards had to be used) and Jewish experts from the Ministry of the Interior were ordered to Nuremberg by plane.

The first law, The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor, prohibited marriages and extra-marital intercourse between "Jews " (the name was now officially used in place of "non-Aryans ") and "Germans " and also the employment of "German " females under forty-five in Jewish households. The second law, The Reich Citizenship Law, stripped Jews of their German citizenship and introduced a new distinction between "Reich citizens " and "nationals."

The Nuremberg Laws by their general nature formalized the unofficial and particular measures taken against Jews up to 1935. The Nazi leaders made a point of stressing the consistency of this legislation with the Party program which demanded that Jews should be deprived of their rights as citizens.

Sources: Noakes, Jeremy, and Geoffrey Pridham. *Documents on Nazism 1919-1945*. NY: Viking Press, 1974, pp. 463-467, and The Nizkor Project.

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Remembering World War II

Anne Frank

"Undeniably Powerful."
– the New York Times

Melissa Muller's acclaimed book becomes a moving motion picture starring Academy Award Winner **Ben Kingsley** in the remarkable story of young Anne, and her courage and hope amidst a world falling apart.

Color/189min/CC/2001
VHS 301056AX $22.98
DVD 301063AX $34.98

Anne Frank: The Life of a Young Girl

A&E brings a striking and moving biography of the young girl whose writings and image are forever etched among the courageous caught in the horror of the World War II holocaust.

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Anne Frank: The Missing Chapter

Seen on **A&E**, this compelling program explores five previously missing chapters from Anne's diary, shedding light on her parents relationship, Anne's own wishes about publication of her diary, and discoveries about the betrayal of the Frank family.

Color/43min
VHS 451023AX $29.98

Anne Frank Remembered

"★ ★ ★ ★ . Editor's Choice."
- Video Librarian

"★ ★ ★ 1/2. " - Leonard Maltin

"Beautiful and Illuminating!"
Los Angeles Times

A deeply moving documentary of WWII's youngest hero, using vintage photos, newsreels and interviews with Anne's friends, family and protector. Narrated by **Kenneth Branagh** and **Glenn Close**.

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1995 Best Documentary Feature.

BW&Color/Rated PG/117min/CC
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Stars **Shelley Winters** who won the Academy Award and **Millie Perkins**

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Stars **Julie Harris**

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The Holocaust: In Memory of Millions

Visit the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, with journalist **Walter Cronkite**, where the truth about the Holocaust is unveiled through definitive photos, unsettling re-creations and survivors' poignant testimony.

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Into the Arms of Strangers

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The Longest Hatred

From **PBS** comes this stunning documentary revealing the history of anti-Semitism with roots long before the Holocaust through current times.

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The Long Way Home

"Superb, Masterful, timeless impact and enduring significance." - Los Angeles Times

"Staggeringly Powerful."- New York Times

The 1997 Academy Award Winner for Best Feature Documentary tells the intimate stories of courage in the harrowing years between World War II and the formation of Israel. Narrated by **Morgan Freeman**

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The Lost Children of Berlin

Steven Spielberg presents this stirring account of the stories recounted by fifty Holocaust survivors reunited where they had attended the last Jewish school in Berlin. Hosted by **Anthony Hopkins**

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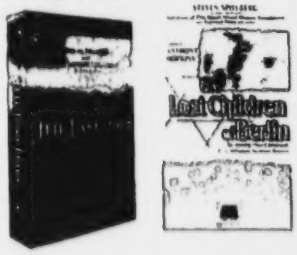

The Nazis

The acclaimed **BBC** documentary from **The History Channel** with stunning archival footage and startling interviews explores how the Nazis came to power and how a cultured nation could be responsible for such acts of inhumanity.

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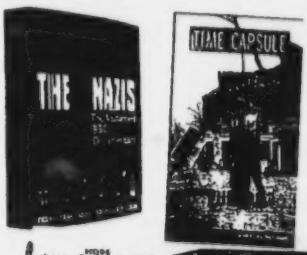

Nuremberg

"Some of the most haunting moments you'll ever see."
- New York Daily News

Alec Baldwin stars in this riveting courtroom drama as Allied prosecutors bring the Nazi high command to trial, with much of the trial testimony derived from actual transcripts. Europe, 1945. The war is over, but the battle for justice is about to begin.

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Steven Spielberg presents this unprecedented and historic documentary chronicling the Holocaust as witnesses by those who survived.

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Seven Academy Awards including Best Picture honored this remarkable adaptation of **Thomas Keneally's** novel about the real-life Catholic war profiteer who saved more than 1,000 Polish Jews from the Nazi's during World War II.

Stars **Liam Neeson, Ralph Fiennes**

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VHS 311331AX $14.98
DVD 311332AX $19.98

WWII The Lost Color Archives

The History Channel presents rare color film footage combined with dramatic first person accounts and diaries to reveal an extraordinary new perspective from the earliest days of the Blitz to D-Day and Hiroshima.

Color/3 vols/150min
VHS 221082AX $29.98
DVD 221083AX $44.98

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Hitler on the Nuremberg Laws

(September 1935)

Extracts from Hitler's Speech in the Reichstag on the Nuremberg Laws

This international unrest in the world would unfortunately seem to have given rise to the view amongst the Jews within Germany that the time has come openly to oppose Jewish interests to those of the German nation. From numerous places vigorous complaints have been received of the provocative action of individuals belonging to this people, and the remarkable frequency of these reports and the similarity of their contents point to a certain system of operation.

...The only way to deal with the problem which remains open is that of legislative action. The German Government is in this controlled by the thought that through a single secular solution it may be possible still to create a level ground [*eine Ebene*] on which the German people may find a tolerable relation towards the Jewish people. Should this hope not be fulfilled and the Jewish agitation both within Germany and in the international sphere should continue, then the position must be examined afresh.

The third [law] is an attempt to regulate by law [the Jewish] problem, which, should this attempt fail, must then be handed over by law to the National-Socialist Party for a final solution.

Behind all three laws there stands the National-Socialist Party and with it and supporting it stands the German nation.

N.H. Baynes, ed., *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler*, I, London, 1942, pp. 731-732.

Source: Yad Vashem

The events of the Holocaust occurred in two main phases: 1933-1939 and 1939-1945.

I. 1933-1939:

* They saw Jews, Gypsies, and the handicapped as a serious biological threat to the purity of the "German (Aryan) Race," what they called the "master race."

* The Nazis mistakenly identified Jews as a race and defined this race as "inferior." They also spewed hatemongering propaganda which unfairly blamed Jews for Germany's economic depression and the country's defeat in World War I (1914-1918).

-- In 1933, new German laws forced Jews to quit their civil service jobs, university and law court positions, and other areas of public life.

-- In April 1933, a boycott of Jewish businesses was instituted.

-- In 1935, laws proclaimed at Nuremberg stripped German Jews of their citizenship even though they retained limited rights.

-- These "Nuremberg Laws" defined Jews not by their religion or by how they wanted to identify themselves but by the blood of their grandparents.

-- Between 1937 and 1939, new anti-Jewish regulations segregated Jews further and made daily life very difficult for them: Jews could not attend public schools, go to theaters, cinemas, or vacation resorts, or reside, or even walk, in certain sections of German cities.

-- Between 1937 and 1939, Jews were forced from Germany's economic life: the Nazis either seized Jewish businesses and properties outright or forced Jews to sell them at bargain prices.

-- In November 1938, this economic attack against German and Austrian Jews changed into the physical destruction of synagogues and Jewish-owned stores, the arrest of Jewish men, the destruction of homes, and the murder of individuals. This centrally organized riot (pogrom) became known as Kristallnacht (the "Night of Broken Glass").

-- Although Jews were the main target of Nazi hatred, the Nazis persecuted other groups they viewed as racially or genetically "inferior

-- Laws passed between 1933 and 1935 aimed to reduce the future number of genetic "inferiors" through involuntary sterilization programs: about 500 children of mixed (African/German) racial backgrounds and 320,000 to 350,000 individuals judged physically or mentally handicapped were subjected to surgical or radiation procedures so they could not have children. Supporters of sterilization also argued that the handicapped burdened the community with the costs of their care. Many of Germany's 30,000 Gypsies were also eventually sterilized and prohibited, along with Blacks, from intermarrying with Germans. Reflecting traditional prejudices, new laws combined traditional prejudices with the new racism of the Nazis which defined Gypsies, by race, as "criminal and asocial."

1933 All non-Aryan civil servants forcibly retired; Kosher butchering outlawed; German nationality can be revoked from those considered "undesirable".

1934 Jewish newspapers can no longer be sold in the streets; Jews deprived of the status of citizenship; marriage and sexual relations between Jews and Aryans forbidden

1936 Jews no longer have the right to vote

1937 Passports for all Jews for travel abroad greatly restricted

1938 Jews must carry ID cards and Jewish passports are marked with "J," Jews may no longer own or bear arms; Jews may no longer head businesses; Jews may no longer attend plays concerts, etc.; all Jewish children are moved to Jewish schools; Jews must hand over drivers' licenses and car registrations; Jews must sell their businesses and hand over securities and jewels; Jews may no longer attend universities.

1939 Jews must follow curfews; Jews must turn in radios to the police; Jews must wear yellow star of David

1940 Jews may no longer have phones; German Jews begin being taken into "protective custody" - deported to concentration camps

1941 Jews may not leave their houses without permission from the police; Jews may no longer use public telephones

1942 Jews are forbidden to subscribe to newspapers, keep pets, keep electrical equipment, own bikes, buy meat, use public transportation, attend school.

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The Nuremberg Laws on Citizenship and Race: September 15, 1935

The Reich Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935

THE REICHSTAG HAS ADOPTED by unanimous vote the following law which is herewith promulgated.

ARTICLE 1.
(1) A subject of the state is one who belongs to the protective union of the German Reich, and who, therefore, has specific obligations to the Reich.
(2) The status of subject is to be acquired in accordance with the provisions of the Reich and the state Citizenship Law.

ARTICLE 2.
(1) A citizen of the Reich may be only one who is of German or kindred blood, and who, through his behavior, shows that he is both desirous and personally fit to serve loyally the German people and the Reich.
(2) The right to citizenship is obtained by the grant of Reich citizenship papers.
(3) Only the citizen of the Reich may enjoy full political rights in consonance with the provisions of the laws.

ARTICLE 3.
The Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy to the Fuehrer, will issue the required legal and administrative decrees for the implementation and amplification of this law.

Promulgated: September 16, 1935. In force: September 30, 1935.

First Supplementary Decree of November 14, 1935

On the basis of Article III of the Reich Citizenship Law of September 15, 1935, the following is hereby decreed:

ARTICLE 1.
(1) Until further provisions concerning citizenship papers, all subjects of German or kindred blood who possessed the right to vote in the Reichstag elections when the Citizenship Law came into effect, shall, for the present, possess the rights of Reich citizens. The same shall be true of those upon whom the Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy to the Fuehrer shall confer citizenship.
(2) The Reich Minister of the Interior, in conjunction with the Deputy to the Fuehrer, may revoke citizenship.

ARTICLE 2.
(1) The provisions of Article I shall apply also to subjects who are of mixed Jewish blood.
(2) An individual of mixed Jewish blood is one who is descended from one or two grandparents who, racially, were full Jews, insofar that he is not a Jew according to Section 2 of Article 5. Full-blooded

Jewish grandparents are those who belonged to the Jewish religious community.

ARTICLE 3.
Only citizens of the Reich, as bearers of full political rights, can exercise the right of voting in political matters, and have the right to hold public office. The Reich Minister of the Interior, or any agency he empowers, can make exceptions during the transition period on the matter of holding public office. The measures do not apply to matters concerning religious organizations.

ARTICLE 4.
(1) A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot hold public office.
(2) Jewish officials will be retired as of December 31, 1935. In the event that such officials served at the front in the World War either for Germany or her allies, they shall receive as pension, until they reach the age limit, the full salary last received, on the basis of which their pension would have been computed. They shall not, however, be promoted according to their seniority in rank. When they reach the age limit, their pension will be computed again, according to the salary last received on which their pension was to be calculated.
(3) These provisions do not concern the affairs of religious organizations.
(4) The conditions regarding service of teachers in public Jewish schools remains unchanged until the promulgation of new laws on the Jewish school system.

ARTICLE 5
(1) A Jew is an individual who is descended from at least three grandparents who were, racially, full Jews...
(2) A Jew is also an individual who is descended from two full-Jewish grandparents if:
(a) he was a member of the Jewish religious community when this law was issued, or joined the community later;
(b) when the law was issued, he was married to a person who was a Jew, or was subsequently married to a Jew;
(c) he is the issue from a marriage with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, which was contracted after the coming into effect of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor of September 15, 1935;
(d) he is the issue of an extramarital relationship with a Jew, in the sense of Section I, and was born out of wedlock after July 31, 1936.

ARTICLE 6.
(1) Insofar as there are, in the laws of the Reich or in the decrees of the National Socialist German Workers' Party and its affiliates, certain requirements for the purity of German blood which extend beyond Article 5, the same remain untouched....

ARTICLE 7.
The Fuehrer and Chancellor of the Reich is empowered to release anyone from the provisions of these administrative decrees.

Nazi Racial Legislation: The Nuremberg Laws

One of the earliest statements of the Nazi party--the policy document of 1920 known as the Twenty-Five Points--explicitly foreshadowed the exclusion of Jews from German citizenship (Point 4).Thus, as soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, no time was lost in proceeding against Germany's Jewish citizens. In the early months of the regime, they were prey to unbridled violence by Party activists during the so-called Brown Terror. Officially, steps were immediately taken to dismiss Jews from the civil service, reduce their number in the professions, and curtail the students in schools and colleges. Partly as a ploy to bring order to the shameless Party activism against inoffensive citizens and to clarify the regime's attitude to German Jewry, the two measures outlined below were passed at a meeting of the Party Congress at Nuremberg on Sept. 15, 1935.
Two of the laws are outlined below. The third, the Reich Flag Act, decreed the new German national flag to be the Nazi swastika flag.

Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor

Firm in the knowledge that the purity of German blood is the basis for the survival of the German people and inspired by the unshakeable determination to safeguard the future of the German nation, the Reichstag has unanimously resolved upon the following law, which is promulgated herewith:

Section 1
Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or some related blood are forbidden.
Such marriages contracted despite the law are invalid, even if they take place abroad in order to avoid the law.

Section 2
Sexual relations outside marriage between Jews and citizens of German or related blood are forbidden.

Section 3
Jews will not be permitted to employ female citizens of German or related blood who are under 45 years as housekeepers.

Section 4
1. Jews are forbidden to raise the national flag or display the national colors.
2. However, they are allowed to display the Jewish colors. The exercise of this right is protected by the State.

Section 5
1. Anyone who disregards Section 1 is liable to penal servitude.
2. Anyone who disregards the prohibition of Section 2 will be punished with imprisonment or penal servitude.
3. Anyone who disregards the provisions of Sections 3 or 4 will be punished with imprisonment up to one year or with a fine, or with one of these penalties.

. . . .

The Reich Citizenship Law, 1935

Article 1
Section 1
A German subject is one who is a member of the protective union of the German Reich and is bound

to it by special obligations. . . .

Section 2
1. A Reich citizen is that subject who is of German or related blood only and who through his behavior demonstrates that he is ready and able to serve faithfully the German people and Reich.
2. The right to citizenship of the Reich is acquired by the grant of citizenship papers.
3. A citizen of the Reich is the sole bearer of full political rights as provided by the law.

In the subsequent clarifying regulation of Nov. 14, 1935, a Jew was defined as anyone who was descended from: (a) at least three racially full Jewish grandparents or (b) two full Jewish parents if he or she belonged to the Jewish religious c ommunity (i.e., an observing Jew); was married to a Jewish person; was the offspring of a full Jew (as defined in a.) or the offspring of an extramarital relationship with a full Jew. Neither could a Jew be a citizen of the Reich, vote or hold public offi ce.
Incidentally, persons of mixed Jewish blood (i.e., half-Jews--with one or two Jewish grandparents) were absolved from these restrictions, though, again, Jewish observance tightened the restrictions.

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Yad Vashem

"And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial... an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 56:5)

Yad Vashem, the national Authority for the Remembrance of the Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, was established in 1953 by act of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) to commemorate the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the years 1933-1945. The Authority also commemorates the heroism and fortitude of the Jewish partisans and the fighters in the Ghetto revolts, as well as the actions of the "Righteous Among the Nations" (non-Jews who saved the lives of Jews).

Located on *Har Hazikaron* (Heb., Hill of Remembrance), a ridge on the western outskirts of Jerusalem, the Yad Vashem Memorial and Institute includes several commemorative monuments, an historical museum, a central archive and a research center for the documentation of the Holocaust.

The task of Yad Vashem is to perpetuate the memory and lessons of the Holocaust for future generations.

Central state ceremonies are held at Yad Vashem each year on Remembrance Day for the Martyrs and Heroes of the Holocaust, which is observed according to the Hebrew Calendar on the 27th day of Nisan (2 May, this year), the anniversary of the start of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Revolt.

The principle memorial at Yad Vashem is the Hall of Remembrance (*Ohel Yizkor*). The severe concrete-walled structure with a low tent-like roof stands empty, save for an eternal flame. Engraved in the black basalt floor are the names of 21 Nazi extermination camps, concentration camps and killing sites in central and eastern Europe. A crypt in front of the memorial flame contains ashes of victims.

The approach to the Hall of Remembrance is lined with trees planted in honor of non-Jewish men and women - "Righteous Among the Nations" - who, at the risk of their own lives, attempted to rescue Jews from the Holocaust. Several of the trees honor members of the Christian clergy, among them a Franciscan priest in Assisi, the bishop of the Greek island of Zakinthos, a Polish nun in Lithuania and a French Protestant pastor. Over 16,000 persons have been honored with the title "Righteous Among the Nations".

Approximately 1.5 million Jewish children perished in the Holocaust. They are specially remembered in the nearby Children's Memorial, an underground cavern in which the flickering flames of memorial candles are reflected in an infinity of tiny lights within the prevailing darkness.

A central element of Yad Vashem is the Historical Museum, which presents the history of the Holocaust through photographs, artifacts, documents and audio-visual aids. The presentation is chronological, showing the progression of Nazi anti-Jewish policies from persecution to ghettoization to systematic mass murder. Displays also present the history of Jewish resistance to the Holocaust, including the heroism of Jewish partisans.

The Yad Vashem Archive collection, the largest and most comprehensive on the Holocaust in the world, comprises 55 million pages of documents, nearly 100,000 photographs, film footage and the videotaped testimonies of survivors. The library contains more than 80,000 titles, thousands of periodicals, and a large number of rare documents.

The International Institute for Holocaust Research coordinates and supports research on national and international levels, organizes conferences and colloquia, and publishes a variety of important works on the Holocaust, including memoirs and diaries. To date, the Institute has published 18 volumes of the projected 32-volume Encyclopedia of Communities (*Pinkasei Hakehilot*), an historical-geographical compendium of every Jewish community destroyed by the Nazis and their collaborators.

A principal mission of Yad Vashem is education. The International School for Holocaust Studies each year holds courses for over 100,000 students, 50,000 soldiers and thousands of educators. Courses for teachers are offered in seven languages in addition to Hebrew, and the school also sends its professional staff abroad to further education about the Holocaust.

Source: Israeli Foreign Ministry. See also Yad Vashem

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Holocaust

Internet Sites | Discussion Groups

Internet Sites:

*** H-Holocaust**
Resources for teachers of the holocaust.
http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~holoweb/

*** United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Educational Resource**
From the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Includes guidelines for t about the holocaust, brief history of the holocaust, children and the holocaust, an annotated videography, more.
http://www.ushmm.org/education/index.htm

*** Cybrary of the Holocaust**
This site uses art, discussion groups, photos, poems, and historical educate scholars and newcomers about the holocaust. Includes a t guide containing background material for teaching about the holoca
http://remember.org/

*** A Teacher's Guide to the Holocaust**
From the Florida Center for Instructional Technology in the College Education at the University of South Florida, this guide consists of s activities, teacher resources, a Holocaust timeline, and information people and the music, visual art, and literature of and about the Hol
http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/Holocaust/

*** Holocaust Teacher Resource Center**
A project of the Holocaust Education Foundation, Inc. in Newport N Virginia, this site offers curriculum guides, lesson plans, essays, an

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seeks submissions of these items as well as annotated bibliographi reviews, and other resources suitable for inclusion on the site.
http://www.holocaust-trc.org/

*** Holocaust Survivors**
This site includes stories of Holocaust survivors for visitors to listen read. Also includes a historical introduction to the Holocaust, a phot an encyclopedia, and other related resources.
http://www.holocaustsurvivors.org/

*** Voices of the Holocaust**
A collection of interviews with Holocaust survivors conducted by Dr. Boder in 1946. The Paul V. Galvin Library of Illinois Institute of Tech has published the materials online.
http://voices.iit.edu/

*** Learning About the Holocaust Through Art**
"The primary goal of this project is to create a significant, high-quali resource about the art of the Holocaust for researchers, educators, and the wider public."
http://art.holocaust-education.net/

Discussion Groups:

*** H-HOLOCAUST**
Primarily for scholars and teachers of the holocaust on the college l
To subscribe, address an e-mail message in the following manner:
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Archives: http://www.h-net.msu.edu/logs/logs.cgi?list=H-Holocaust

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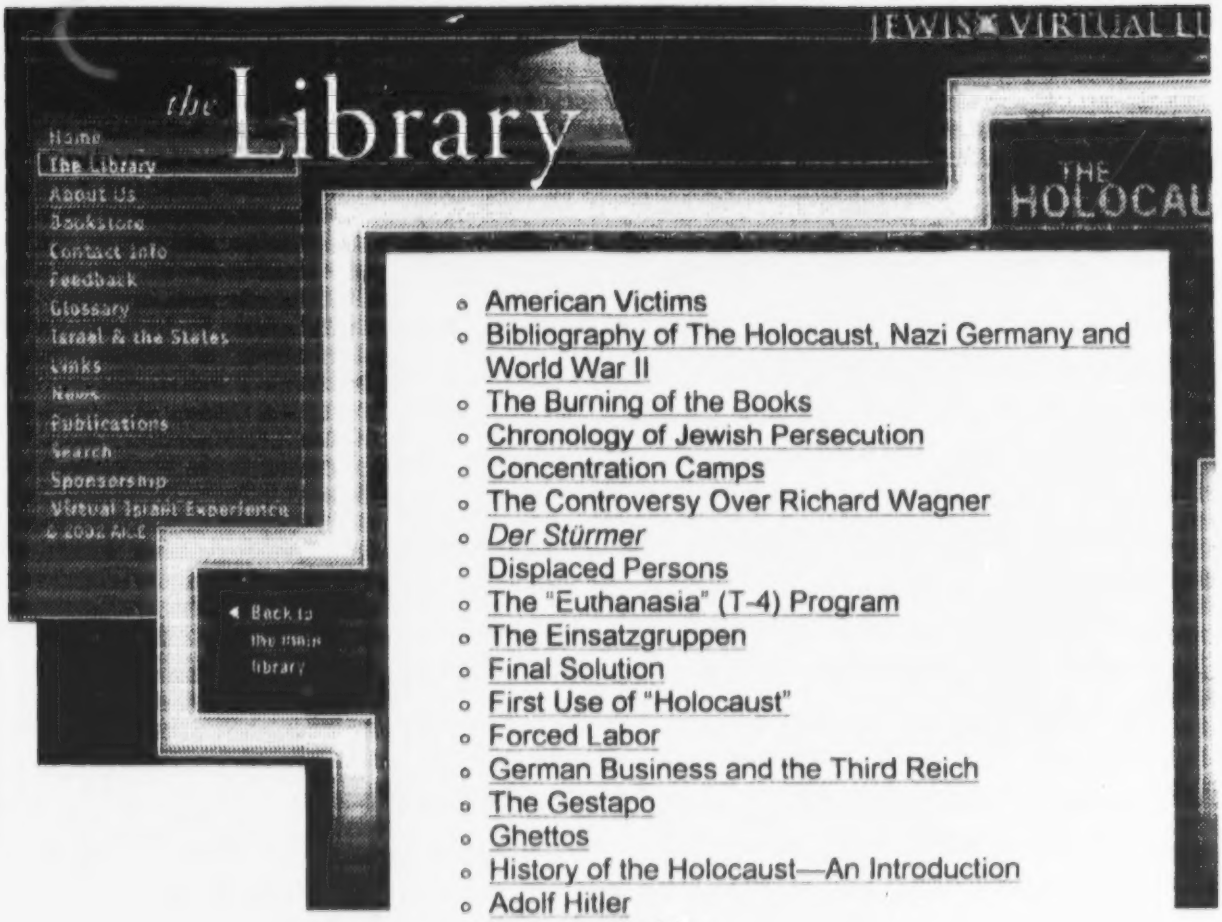
On Gypsies

"Like the Jews, Gypsies were singled out by the Nazis for racial persecution and annihilation. They were `nonpersons,' of `foreign blood,' `labor-shy,' and as such were termed asocials. To a degree, they shared the fate of the Jews in their ghettos, in the extermination camps, before firing squads, as medical guinea pigs, and being injected with lethal substances. Ironically, the German writer Johann Christof Wagenseil claimed in 1697 that Gypsies stemmed from German Jews. A more contemporary Nazi theorist believed that `the Gypsy cannot, by reason of his inner and outer makeup (Konstruktion), be a useful member of the human community.'<70> The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 aimed at the Jews were soon amended to include the Gypsies. In 1937, they were classified as asocials, second-class citizens, subject to concentration camp imprisonment. <71> As early as 1936, some had been sent to camps. After 1939, Gypsies from Germany and from the German-occupied territories were shipped by the thousands first to Jewish ghettos in Poland at Warsaw, Lublin, Kielce, Rabka, Zary, Siedlce and others. <72>

It is not known how many were killed by the Einsatzgruppen charged with speedy extermination by shooting. For the sake of efficiency Gypsies were also shot naked, facing their pre-dug graves. According to the Nazi experts, shooting Jews was easier, they stood still, `while the Gypsies cry out, howl, and move constantly, even when they are already standing on the shooting ground. Some of them even jumped into the ditch before the volley and pretended to be dead.' <73> The first to go were the German Gypsies; 30,000 were deported East in three waves in 1939, 1941 and 1943. Those married to Germans were exempted but were sterilized, as were their children after the age of twelve. <74>Just how were the Gypsies of Europe `expedited"? Adolf Eichmann, chief strategist of these diabolical logistics, supplied the answer in a telegram from Vienna to the Gestapo: Regarding transport of Gypsies be informed that on Friday, October 20, 1939, the first transport of Jews will depart Vienna. To this transport 3-4 cars of Gypsies are to be attached. Subsequent trains will depart from Vienna, Mahrisch-Ostrau and Katowice [Poland]. The simplest method is to attach some carloads of Gypsies to each transport. Because these transports must follow schedule, a smooth execution of this matter is expected. Concerning a start in the Altreich [Germany proper] be informed that this will be coming in 3-4 weeks. Eichmann. <74>

Open season was declared on the Gypsies, too. For a while Himmler wished to exempt two tribes and `only' sterilize them, but by 1942 he signed the decree for all Gypsies to be shipped to Auschwitz. <76> There they were subjected to all that Auschwitz meant, including the medical experiments, before they were exterminated. Gypsies perished in Dachau, Mauthausen, Ravensbruck and other camps. At Sachsenhausen they were subjected to special experiments that were to prove scientifically that their blood was different from that of the Germans. The doctors in charge of this `research' were the same ones who had practiced previously on black prisoners of war. Yet, for `racial reasons' they were found unsuitable for sea water experiments. <77>

Gypsies were often accused of atrocities committed by others; they were blamed, for instance, for the looting of gold teeth from a hundred dead Jews abandoned on a Rumanian road. <78>Gypsy women were forced to become guinea pigs in the hands of Nazi physicians. Among others they were sterilized as `unworthy of human reproduction' (fortpflanzungsunwuerdig), only to be ultimately annihilated as not worthy of living. ... At that, the Gypsies were the luckier ones; in Bulgaria, Greece, Denmark and Finland they were spared. <80>For a while there was a Gypsy Family Camp in Auschwitz, but on August 6,1944, it was liquidated. Some men and women were shipped to German factories as slave labor; the rest, about 3,000 women, children and old people, were gassed. <81>No precise statistics exist about the extermination of European Gypsies. Some estimates place the number between 500,000 and 600,000, most of them gassed in Auschwitz. <82> Others indicated a more conservative 200,000 Gypsy victims of the Holocaust. <83>"



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